Newly Elected Leaders Toolkit

Life, Well Run

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You're a Newly Elected Official

Leading Your Community:
A Guide for Elected Officials

Excerpted from the ICMA publication

Life, Well Run

Leading

Your Community

A GUIDE FOR LOCAL ELECTED LEADERS

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

National League of Cities

Part I

Local Leadership: The Basics

You've got to think about big things while you're doing small things,
so that all the small things go in the right direction.

—Alvin Toffler

Being a local elected official involves meeting, connecting, communicating, preparing, listening, responding, and being available to do the public's business. On a typical day, you might attend a neighborhood forum, meet with a local reporter, respond to e-mails from citizens, talk with the chief administrator about a neighborhood concern, review a proposed green building policy, make decisions at a regularly scheduled governing body meeting on land use, and talk to an unhappy constituent at the grocery store.

And there are atypical days: the day a severe storm damages your community, leaving citizens without power or a safe place to spend the night, or the day seven children are sent home from school with symptoms of a dangerous illness. That's the public's business, and your constituents will look to you to guide the community's response.

As an elected leader, you must be prepared to do the public's business every-day—from the routine, to the challenging, to the heart wrenching, to the almost impossible.

Like most local leaders, you face a constant pull between the tyranny of the immediate—problems, challenges, questions, demands that need attention NOW—and the desire to focus on the long-term well-being of your community. As an elected official, you play a fundamental role in the evolving goals, purposes, and direction of your community as you ensure that the needs of your community's residents are met every day.

The chapters in Part I focus on

- Building an effective leadership team within the local legal framework
- Setting policy goals and developing plans to support them
- Using meetings to support good decision making
- Communicating and connecting with your constituents
- Working with the chief administrator.

The Local Leadership Team

You can accomplish anything in life, provided you do not mind who gets the credit.

—Harry S Truman

Successful local leadership depends on working within the basic legal framework for your government, understanding key roles and responsibilities, and forging strong relationships with members of the local leadership team.

The Legal Framework

The legal framework under which your local government operates starts with your state law and delegated local powers, duties, and responsibilities.

Since the United States Constitution doesn't mention local governments, these entities are created and regulated by the states—which means that there are fifty different legal and political frameworks. Most state laws outline the powers of their local governments in a "charter."

If your local government has a charter, it is your community's constitution. Generally, a charter can be adopted, amended, or repealed only by a majority vote of a city's voters. Most charters cover a range of issues, including form of government, all aspects of elections and service as an elected official, legislative authority, powers of the governing body, responsibilities of the executive, financing and taxing, human resource policies, bonding, and more.

Preamble to the City of Dearborn Charter

We, the people of the City of Dearborn (Michigan), in order to provide a government which recognizes that human life and talent is our most important resource, and the development and enrichment of these our most important tasks, do adopt this charter. We acknowledge that political power is inherent in the people. We desire a framework of government in which all people can participate, by which policy objectives reflecting the people's goals can be fashioned and through which officials can be chosen in a democratic manner and held accountable for their actions.

While the success of your leadership team depends in large measure on the people who serve on it, the legal framework is an important guide to who does what and how you get your community's business done.

As a local elected leader, you should be familiar with the legal structure under which your government operates. Your state municipal league, chief administrative officer, and local government attorney are good resources for learning about your local government's legal framework.

A Word about Structure

A local government leadership team brings together elected local officials who are chosen individually by the public in the voting booth and full-time appointed professionals who are hired to do specific government jobs. The makeup of the leadership team can vary according to form of government. There are four forms of local government in the United States:

- **Mayor-council:** A directly elected mayor is the chief executive officer, and an elected council is the legislative body. The council is led by an elected council chair.

- **Council-manager:** An elected council serves as the legislative body, a directly elected mayor or someone elected from the council serves as the council chair, and a professional city manager hired by the council oversees day-to-day operations.

- **Commission:** Voters elect commissioners to a small governing body, and the commissioners handle both executive and legislative functions.

- **Representative town meeting:** Citizens serve as the policy-making body, and a small elected board of selectmen oversees implementation of the policies.

Fast Fact

According to NLC's recent survey, more than 96 percent of local governments use either the mayor-council (38 percent) or council-manager (58 percent) form of government. The average length of service for governing body members in mayor-council cities is 7.9 years, and in council-manager cities, 7.2 years. Nearly 30 percent of local elected officials are elected by districts, 45 percent at-large, and the remainder by a combination of district and at-large.

Roles and Responsibilities

Official roles are defined in charters, statutes, ordinances, and job descriptions. Practical roles evolve depending on community needs, the style of the mayor and chief administrative officer, and working relationships among elected officials.

Elected local officials are the **policy leaders.** In the mayor-council form, the elected mayor is both a policy leader and an executive leader for the community.

The chief administrative officer or city manager is the local government **management leader.**

Together, the elected leaders and chief administrative officer ensure that the local government works. They set the vision, provide the services, and guarantee a good quality of life in the community.

A Local Policy Leadership Team

Specific responsibilities of a local policy leadership team include

- Establish a community vision
- Develop long-term goals, priorities, and objectives
- Adopt policies to guide local programs and services
- Enact ordinances (local laws)
- Communicate with citizens about vision, priorities, programs, services, and community challenges
- Review and approve a comprehensive annual budget and capital improvement plan
- Oversee the effectiveness of the local government's programs
- Oversee management performance, including fiscal responsibility
- Respond to citizen complaints and requests, and coordinate responses with local staff
- Hire and evaluate the chief administrative officer
- Represent the local government and the community.

The City Manager or Chief Administrative Officer

Specific responsibilities of the city manager or chief administrative officer include

- Carry out the policies adopted by the elected officials
- Oversee enforcement of city ordinances
- Provide policy alternatives to support governing body action
- Manage all local services, including but not limited to public works, public safety, planning and economic development, parks and recreation, libraries, senior citizen and youth services, and human resources
- Adhere to national, state, and local requirements for financial management, purchasing, public meetings, public records, and ethical conduct
- Prepare the annual operating budget and capital improvement plan for governing body action
- Ensure fiscal responsibility and modern accounting practices
- Recruit, hire, train, and supervise the local workforce

- Prepare materials for the governing body meeting agenda
- Develop long-range operating plans with guidance from elected officials
- Oversee local economic development, including negotiation of development and revenue deals
- Coordinate information sharing and action among elected officials, employees, and citizens.

The Mayor in a Council-Manager Government

Specific responsibilities of the mayor in a council-manager government include

- Chair governing body meetings, which includes paying attention to parliamentary procedures, and ensure the accomplishment of desired outcomes
- Serve as a primary contact between the management staff and the governing body to keep the community agenda moving
- Encourage good communication with the citizens, the media, other members of the governing body, and the chief administrator
- Represent the local government in many settings in the community, with other local governments, and at the state and national levels
- Facilitate action during meetings, between meetings, and throughout the community
- Help to create, maintain, and strengthen the effectiveness of the local leadership team
- Encourage and support the community during a crisis.

In the mayor-council form of government, the mayor is both the elected political leader and the chief executive, working in partnership with the governing body but not as a member of it. The governing body chair is the leader of the elected team, responsible for ensuring productive meetings and effective group action. Together, the elected mayor and council president/chair carry out the administrative and policy-making roles that are divided between the mayor and the chief administrative officer in the council-manager form.

Emerging Roles

The challenges facing today's communities and the changing expectations of local leaders have led to some new roles. Perhaps the most dynamic aspect of your leadership is your relationship with the people who elected you to lead the community. In a study of how to connect citizens and their government, the National League of Cities Advisory Council identified these roles for local elected officials:

- **Models of civility and cooperation** to set the tone for civil discourse and productive problem solving

- **Messengers** using the "bully pulpit" to encourage citizens, businesses, the media, community organizations, and others to play an active role in community building
- **Shapers of processes** that connect citizens and their government in productive ways
- **Leaders** who bring people together and build trust.

Fast Fact

The amount of time elected officials spend on council-related business varies according to community size, nature of position (i.e., full time or part time), and other employment commitments. According to NLC's survey, elected officials in small cities spend an average of 20 hours per week on council business; in medium cities, 25 hours; and in large cities (more than 200,000 in population), 42 hours.

Relationships: It Takes a Team

Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.

—Henry Ford

Charters and municipal codes document how a local government is supposed to work by defining roles and responsibilities. The foundation for effective action is another R: relationships.

A successful team is more effective than its individual parts—creating synergy, stronger collective ideas, and a shared sense of accomplishment. One good idea leads to a better idea. Disagreements lead to productive discussion, an understanding of and respect for differences, and a better shared solution.

What makes a group of people a team?

- A shared and explicit vision
- A well-defined and accepted mission
- Clear goals to which everyone is committed
- Energy and enthusiasm
- Commitment to work together
- Professional respect for one another
- A commitment to understanding each other's perspectives and to resolving conflicts

- Ability to communicate comfortably
- Ability to disagree openly and productively
- Effective decision-making procedures
- Distributed participation: everyone engages and handles different responsibilities
- Motivation to get the job done
- High levels of trust, acceptance, and support among members
- Cohesion: a sense of belonging and a desire to stick together.

The more success a group has in carrying out its mission, the more it grows as a team. In sports, winning teams keep winning—not always because they have the most talented players, but because individuals learn to trust each other and play to each other's strengths.

What gets in the way of effective teamwork?

- Lack of commitment
- Misunderstanding or lack of knowledge about group processes and rules
- Destructive competition
- Poor communication
- Poor interpersonal skills
- Personal conflicts
- External pressures and/or new demands that stretch the team's capacity
- Political grandstanding
- Unwillingness to see/consider different perspectives or to compromise
- Representation of only one perspective or one group regardless of the issue.

Fast Fact

Conflict among members of the governing body is the most frequently mentioned source of frustration for local elected officials, cited by 43 percent in NLC's survey. The next most frequently mentioned source of frustration is pressure from interest groups, at 31 percent.

When the team doesn't work well together, there can be consequences:

- Public embarrassment
- Inability to act
- Delays and gridlock
- Long meetings without results
- Lost opportunities for the community

- A stressful and unproductive environment
- Personal conflicts that interfere with productivity
- Turnover among both staff and elected officials.

Trust and cohesion are foundations of successful teamwork but are often the hardest team attributes to achieve. The constant pressures of public service—tight budgets, citizen demands, media inquiries, limited time, tough issues, the next election—strain team relations. But the bottom line is, you were elected as an individual to serve on a group that makes decisions together on behalf of the community you serve. If you want to be on a winning team, help the team win!

Building a Successful Team

Paying attention to how your group works together is an important part of building a high-performance governing body. Ways to pay attention range from informal action reviews after a governing body meeting to a formal team-building process using an outside facilitator. Right after an election when the team changes is the best time to focus on how your group will work together.

You can tell your team-building efforts are successful when you have

- Open and honest discussion and feedback among team members
- Frank conversation about cooperation, expectations, and team problems or challenges

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Key Players on the Local Leadership Team

- The ***elected governing body*** meets regularly to make collective decisions, set policies, enact laws, and establish broad directions for the community.
- The ***chief administrative officer*** is the primary staff contact for the elected governing body. The chief administrative officer is hired and evaluated by the governing body, interacts regularly with the governing body and its individual members, brings management expertise to the local government, and provides information and resources for decision making.
- The ***professional staff/department heads*** work directly for the chief administrative officer; support the chief administrative officer and the governing body by providing expertise, information, and resources; and carry out policies passed by the governing body through programs and services delivered by their departments.

How these elected and appointed leaders work together varies from community to community, but they all play vital roles in carrying out the local government's mission, delivering services, and meeting citizen needs.

Team-Building Skills Checklist

After a governing body meeting, assess your teamwork skills by giving yourself a score from 1 (rarely) to 5 (always) on each of the teamwork dimensions:

☐ Did I create a relaxed, collegial atmosphere that supported and encouraged collaboration?

☐ Did I participate actively in the discussions?

☐ Did I help keep the discussion on track?

☐ Did I understand and accept the task(s) the team was working on?

☐ Did I listen to others?

☐ Did I feel comfortable disagreeing with others?

☐ Did I feel comfortable when others disagreed with me?

☐ Did I seek consensus/help the group move toward a shared conclusion?

☐ Did I use my knowledge and skills during the session to help the group get its work done?

- Increased awareness of the impact of individual behavior on team performance.

Informal team-building sessions give the group a chance to look at how it is working and to identify obstacles to effectiveness. Consider these options:

- **Newcomers' orientation.** Shortly after an election, incumbent elected officials, working in partnership with the chief administrator, plan an orientation for the new members. The discussion might include veterans' recollections of their own first few weeks in office. Sample reports, agendas, minutes, and other materials will help newcomers get up to speed.

- **Informal team assessment.** The team-building skills checklist above provides a tool for starting a conversation about how each individual rates his or her own performance as a team member.

- **Work sessions on working together.** Your governing body can spend extra time together beyond official meetings to build team rapport using this handbook as a resource.

Hiring a Facilitator

While the chief administrative officer and mayor can successfully lead team work sessions and orientations for new members, an experienced facilitator is better equipped to lead an intensive team-building process.

The facilitator makes it possible for all members of the team—including the mayor and chief administrative officer—to participate fully in the learning process. A facilitator also brings expertise in managing a group process.

Team-Building Challenges in the Public Sector

Conducting a team-building session in the public sector poses special challenges.

- **Open meeting laws:** All fifty states and the District of Columbia have laws that define boundaries for public meetings. Generally, a public meeting is not the best setting for team building—but violating your state open meeting law is not a reasonable alternative. Most open meeting laws have exceptions that allow private session. Check with your legal counsel to decide on your best course of action.

- **Media interest:** Even if your state open meeting law permits a closed team-building session, a private governing body meeting will draw media attention. To avoid speculation, inform your media about the meeting—who will be there, what you hope to accomplish, and what information will be available after the session.

The Facilitator's Role

The facilitator is a "process person" who guides the group through productive discussions and keeps track of agreements. The facilitator also helps the group focus on the issues that are most important: what's happening in the group right now, how do team members interact, what's interfering with the team's effectiveness, and what actions does the team need to take. The facilitator helps the group solve its problems.

How do we know if we need a facilitator?
A highly motivated group may be able to conduct its own team-building session. But a group that has had major disagreements or political conflicts could benefit from a facilitator's help. If a team-building process is threatening because it implies criticism of the entire group or of specific members, an experienced facilitator who is not a team member can provide impartial direction, ease the tensions, and create an environment for open discussion.

How can we find a good facilitator?
Check with nearby colleges, organizational development consulting firms, national associations, your state municipal league or state county association, and other local governments that have conducted team-building sessions. Hiring a facilitator is like filling an important vacancy in your government. You should review résumés, assess the person's experience with the public sector, and talk with references.

- **Post-session interviews and feedback:** Be sure that your team agrees on what information about the session will be released to the media, and on how individuals will handle follow-up discussions with the media and others who might ask.

Team Building and Politics

Creating a strong team in a political environment is tough. The stress of a campaign and the competition for votes make an already difficult process even more challenging. Ideological differences around major issues like growth, immigration, and taxes can further strain the capacity of individual elected officials to work together as a team.

> **Some Words about Human Relations**
>
> The Six Most Important Words
> *"I admit I made a mistake"*
> The Five Most Important Words
> *"You did a good job"*
> The Four Most Important Words
> *"What do you think?"*
> The Three Most Important Words
> *"If you please"*
> The Two Most Important Words
> *"Thank You"*
> The One Most Important Word
> *"We"*
> The Least Most Important Word
> *"I"*
>
> **—Author Unknown**

Governing bodies that become successful teams rely on

- Shared commitment to making good decisions on behalf of the community
- Willingness to focus on building a team
- Protocols for working together to try to minimize personal conflicts and maximize productive decision making, including consequences for violating the protocols
- Respect for each other as individuals who share a commitment to public service
- Respect for different perspectives as a way to improve decision making
- Knowledge of how to balance strongly held views with the need for compromise to reach a conclusion.

Recap

- State law, legal documents, and form of government provide a basic legal framework for official roles and responsibilities.
- Elected officials are the policy leaders in the community, and the chief administrative officer is the management/administrative leader—but the roles overlap and work best when the distinctions aren't hard and fast.
- It takes a team to lead a government, and it takes hard work to create a successful team.

Habits of Highly Effective Governing Bodies

Clearly define roles and relationships

Think and act strategically, focusing on key policy issues

Operate in a culture of values and ethics

Regularly evaluate policy implementation

Work together as a team

Master small-group decision making

Develop and follow protocols for governing body behavior and governing body–staff relations

Allocate time and energy appropriately

Set clear rules and procedures for meetings

Get regular assessments of citizen concerns and governing body performance

Recognize their position in the intergovernmental system and build productive partnerships

Focus on personal learning and development as leaders

Look to the future

Adapted from Carl H. Neu Jr., 10 Habits of Highly Effective Councils

Recommended Local Reading

- State law governing local authority and responsibilities
- Your local government charter and municipal code

Policy Making and Strategic Planning

*I get up every morning determined to both change
the world and have one hell of a good time. Sometimes this
makes planning the day difficult.*

—E. B. White

So you're a member of a local leadership team, committed to ensuring that the team works effectively.

And you're also a local policy maker, committed to making good policy decisions as a member of the local leadership team.

What exactly does that mean? What is policy?

You ran for office with ideas about what's important for your community—the issues that matter most, changes you'd like to see, your vision for the community. As part of your transition from citizen to elected official to team member to policy maker, you'll begin to mesh your personal ideas with those of others to define desirable directions for the community.

This chapter examines the process of local policy making, including

- Understanding policy
- Setting goals and strategic priorities
- Linking policies and money through the annual budget
- Evaluating policy effectiveness.

A Vision and a Sense of Mission

As an elected official, you are responsible for making decisions about the scope of services that your government will provide and about how to pay for those services. You are also responsible for establishing policies that affect every dimension of your community—local economic growth, cultural change, the environment, new residents, regional collaboration, long-term financial management, and more. Your decisions are guided by a clearly defined mission.

A mission is the reason that your local government exists, and it is usually defined in terms of the community's vision of its future. And your job as an elected official is to put in place policies, programs, and facilities that will carry out the mission to make your community's vision come true.

Thornton, Colorado (www.cityofthornton.net), started its visioning process with this question: *is there more we should be doing to ensure a quality future for our community*? That led to a yearlong effort to engage citizens through public workshops, three geographic focus subcommittees, and an ongoing steering committee that helped the governing body produce a comprehensive plan and a vision for a city. The vision defines Thornton as a city that strives for *quality and diverse neighborhoods, plentiful quality jobs, great amenities,* and *active and engaged partners.*

Some local governments create both a broad vision statement for the community and a specific mission for the government. Some also develop core value statements that define how the government serves and guides the community. Others use slogans to convey what the community is or expects to be. The specific form your "sense of mission" takes is secondary to ensuring that your governing body operates from a shared foundation that defines an overall direction and your team's commitment to the community. (For more on creating a community vision, see Chapter 6.)

Understanding Policy

Policy is a plan of action agreed to by a group of people with the power to carry it out and enforce it. Policy can be as specific as adopting an ordinance—a local law—requiring dogs to be kept on leashes in public areas, or requiring all residents to recycle specific materials, or requiring developers to build sidewalks in residential neighborhoods. Or it can be a declaration of a broad government commitment, such as providing affordable housing or attracting new businesses to broaden the tax base and create new jobs. Generally, policy making means

Sample Mission Statements

Riverside, California
The City of Riverside is committed to providing high quality municipal services to ensure a safe, inclusive, and livable community.

Georgetown, Texas
To preserve and enhance the quality of life and unique character of Georgetown by preserving the rich heritage and natural resources; promoting well-planned development, cost-effective professional management, and competent, friendly services; and protecting its citizens, the environment, and all other assets.

deciding *what* you are going to do in your community, not *how* you are going to do it.

Your annual budget, capital improvement plan, land use master plan, and housing strategy are all policy statements that define a course for your community.

Good public policy is

- **Beneficial** to the community

- **Necessary** to move the community forward or to respond to a specific emerging need

- **Consistent** with the government's overall mission

- **Easily understood** by the community in general and by those who will be most affected by it

- **Well-informed and rigorous** based on an analysis of policy alternatives and implementation costs and consequences

- **Open to change or improvement** as circumstances change or evaluation suggests a new direction

- **Responsive** to urgent needs, emerging challenges, or needed changes of direction

- **Able to be enacted** on the basis of clear input from the chief administrative officer.[1]

Policy making can be passive as well as active. Deciding not to act (or not deciding), deciding to do something the way you did it last year, or making a special exception to a rule are policy decisions.

Adopted policies are usually summarized—or codified—in the local government code. To understand your government's mission, it is important to become familiar with adopted policies. Begin your service as a policy maker by reviewing the most recent annual budget; the capital improvement plan, the comprehensive, general, or master plan; and the local government code.

Strategic Planning: Setting Goals and Priorities

While all policy that supports your mission is important, it's the big issues that merit most of your time. Action demands, such as fixing potholes in certain neighborhoods, replacing trees in public areas, or adding stop signs, are important but should not be allowed to consume all your time.

Today's local governments generally use strategic plans to set clear policy goals and priorities for action.

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1 Adapted from Department of Education and Children Services, Government of South Australia, January 2008.

A strategic planning or goal-setting process

- Moves the organization and the community toward a desired future
- Provides a framework for action to guide the leadership team
- Gets everyone pulling in the same direction by helping the team share different ideas and then agree on which goals will get attention
- Helps you manage your time more effectively by deciding what the governing body will focus on
- Establishes clear guidelines for the chief administrative officer and professional staff
- Provides guidelines and priorities for budgeting, particularly if you're facing financial constraints
- Strengthens your team by giving it experience working together to make tough choices.

A strategic plan defines broad policy goals that span several years. Priorities, objectives, and strategies narrow the timeframe and describe how the organization will achieve the long-term goals. The strategic plan serves as a framework for setting annual priorities, defining action strategies, and allocating resources to carry out the actions needed to reach the goals.

Some plans begin with broad strategic priorities or themes that carry over from year to year with annual targets under each priority. The language may vary but the purpose is the same: to agree on broad directions for the community that will guide governance action during a specified period of time.

Many local leadership teams use retreats to develop strategic plans and review and update policy goals.

Strategic Planning Steps

A strategic planning or goal-setting process follows these general steps.

Step 1: Identify issues and needs. Challenges to be pursued, needs to be met, or problems to be solved are identified by the governing body and chief administrator, and often emerge from citizen surveys or from a broad citizen involvement process.

Step 2: Define goals. Goals define the desired outcome in response to a challenge, need, or problem. Goals often identify a point or outcome to work toward beyond what the governing body can accomplish in one year or even one term of office.

Step 3: Establish action strategies/objectives. Strategies, objectives, targets, or milestones define steps you intend to take within a specified timeframe to move toward your goals. Strategies are usually tied to the annual budget and define measurable achievements so that the team can assess progress.

Talking Strategic Planning

Columbia, South Carolina (www.columbiasc.net), includes these definitions as part of its operational strategic plan:

Vision is a statement of a possible and desirable future state of the organization.

Mission is the reason for an organization's existence, or what it does and what the organization will do to make the vision a reality.

Values are the basic beliefs that reflect what an organization is, what it stands for, and how it provides service.

Strategic Issues are concerns that must be addressed in order to achieve the vision, fulfill the mission, and be true to the values. Strategic issues may arise from gaps between expectations and performance and may be identified from an analysis of the organization's strengthens, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Goals are statements of desired outcomes that explain what the organization is trying to achieve.

Strategies describe how the organization will accomplish the goals.

Measures provide quantitative or qualitative indications of the extent to which goals are being met.

Step 4: Choose priorities. Priorities define what will be done first based on both need and available resources. Money is often the key factor in determining priorities. But to ensure that you pay attention to the most important challenges, needs, or problems—not just to the affordable ones—you may want to leave the money issue off the table in initial discussions of priorities.

Step 5: Provide resources for action. Translating goals and strategies into programs is generally a staff role, but the governing body monitors progress on the priorities it has set. The annual budget is the operating framework for accomplishing the work that the leadership team has agreed to. The next section of this handbook focuses on linking policy goals and money.

Step 6: Evaluate progress. Unsolicited feedback gives the governing body one way to assess progress toward its goals; it is also an important indicator of how well government priorities are connecting with citizen's needs and interests. Regular and rigorous measures of performance are important as well. Performance measures can include surveys to assess how residents view services and overall government performance.

Little Rock, Arkansas (www.littlerock.org), used a planning retreat to identify goals and set priorities. Governing body members listed their interest areas and then rated the interests as "must do," "should do," and "nice to do." The group agreed that anything in the "nice to do" category would be delayed to focus limited resources on the most important priorities. Four "must do" policy priorities emerged in these broad categories: ***public safety, economic development, basic city services,*** and ***infrastructure.*** One "should do" priority addressed ***quality of life,*** defined as recreational, creative, and educational experiences. After the initial retreat, the governing body adopted five policy statements that were crafted by the staff from the broad categories. During the annual budget process each year, the governing body reviews the five policy statements and develops budget priorities around updated information.

Linking Policies and Money: The Annual Budget

The municipal budget is your most important annual policy statement. It defines how the local government team will implement its priorities for the next fiscal year, and where the money will come from to carry out that work plan. The late Henry Maier, former mayor of Milwaukee, once called budgeting "the world series of municipal government," because it is the government's most important annual action.

The annual budget is much more than a one-year spending plan. It is

- A statement of priorities for the community
- A management blueprint for providing services
- The document that translates policies into action
- A tool for protecting the government's long-term financial health
- A communication document for the public.

The process of developing and monitoring the annual budget requires the cooperation of citizens, the governing body, the chief administrator, and department heads.

Developing a municipal budget is challenging for many reasons:

- The population of your community has diverse needs and preferences, and not everyone has the same ability to pay for services.
- State and federal regulations mandate some activities and affect others.
- Many local governments services are difficult to plan and evaluate.
- Budget decisions are made in a political environment with pressure to address short-term problems and respond to special needs—sometimes at the expense of long-term planning.

A facilitator helped the **Village of Indian Hill, Ohio** (www.ci.indian-hill.oh.us), agree on goals and set priorities. The facilitator interviewed elected officials to identify major program categories and goals, and then compiled a matrix, which each official used to rate each goal's priority as high, medium, or low. The officials then held a retreat to identify and focus on shared high priorities. In addition to the city manager and current mayor and city council, a former mayor and council member were included in the retreat to provide a broader perspective.

- Engaging citizens in the budget process is important and highly recommended, but it is also enormously challenging.
- Local elected officials have different ideas about priorities for spending and raising money.
- Citizens' desire for public services generally exceeds their willingness to pay taxes or fees.
- There's never enough money.

Adding to the challenge of municipal budgeting are local antitax movements, state actions that limit local revenue-raising authority, national economic challenges that affect local revenue, and reductions in federal and state financial support.

To succeed, it's important to be **well-prepared, well-informed,** and **willing to work as a team** for the good of your community.

The following sections provide a snapshot of the local budget process. They focus on what you, as an elected official, need to know to make good decisions

Albany, Oregon (www.cityofalbany.net), adopted a strategic plan to carry out its mission and vision. The strategic plan, which is updated annually, is built around these four themes:

- Great neighborhoods
- A safe city
- A healthy economy
- An effective government.

For each theme, the plan identifies broad goals, measurable objectives, and strategies and actions to meet the benchmarks. The themes and goals generally remain constant over time, while the objectives and strategies and actions are reviewed and refined.

about your community's annual financial plan. Your chief administrative officer is the best resource for providing details on your community's approach to budgeting. Reviewing recent operating budgets is required homework if you're new to elected office or facing your first budget process.

The Operating Budget

The operating budget lays out your government's financial plan for the upcoming fiscal year. Generally, the chief administrative officer will prepare a budget for the governing body to review, revise, and adopt. Budget preparation and review are based on guidelines and priorities established by the leadership team. In a strong mayor form of government, the mayor prepares the budget for governing body review.

Typical components of a local budget include

- A message from the chief executive/chief administrative officer highlighting major program and service priorities, changes from previous years, and key challenges for the current year, and summarizing revenue and expenditures

- A summary of program priorities, and a breakdown of how money is allocated to carry out those priorities and produce specific outcomes

- Details on revenue—where the money will come from, how sources of revenue have changed, and issues for further study

- Details on expenditures organized by program and department, including operating expenses for the specific fiscal year and capital expenses that can be spread over multiple years for public improvements and acquisitions

- Quantitative performance measures that show results that will be achieved by spending the money as proposed

- Comparative data showing how spending has changed over several years, including, in some cases, projections for the following year.

The Capital Budget

The capital budget is the other major part of your local government budget. Capital items include the construction, acquisition, or improvement of public facilities such as libraries, sewers, jails, bridges, and roads. Capital projects usually span multiple years and are expensive. As a result, most local governments develop separate budgets and plans for capital needs, and then include the one-year annual costs for the capital budget in the operating budget.

Key components of the capital budget are

- A comprehensive capital improvement plan that lists all the capital project activities that the government is undertaking within the coming fiscal year

- Proposed funding for capital projects, including any state or federal funding and whether the project will be funded by local revenues—usually called pay-as-you-go—or will require borrowing that will produce long-term debt

- Annual operating costs for capital projects such as staffing, utilities, and equipment. Because most capital projects create ongoing increases in operating expenses, the two budgets must be connected.

Analyzing and Interpreting the Budget: Questions to Ask

The governing body can assess the proposed budget by asking the following questions:

- **Does the budget reflect local priorities?** Review the budget against your leadership team's policy goals and priorities to make sure that it allocates money appropriately. If something is missing, ask why.

- **Is the budget balanced, and was it balanced in prior years?** Under state law, local governments must adopt "balanced" budgets. Your job is to make sure the financial assumptions for revenues and expenditures that produce the balanced budget proposal are sound.

- **How is your revenue structure changing?** Examine revenue trends to assess how reliable the revenue projections are, and what any changes in your revenue structure will mean for this budget and the community's longer-term financial health.

- **How is the program expenditure plan changing?** In looking at expenditure requests, which are usually organized by programs, departments, or cost centers, focus on areas where significant changes are proposed and ask why.

- **How do proposed capital projects support local priorities, and how does long-term spending affect long-term financial health?** Make sure that proposed capital spending projects are consistent with agreed-upon priorities, and take some time to review and discuss funding for capital projects. Funding may come from multiple sources, such as bond issues (which must be approved in a referendum), grants, tax increment financing revenue, and private contributions.

- **Does the budget include reserves for emergencies?** Is the budget just balanced or does it include money for emergencies? If your local government is not appropriating money to a reserve account, you may be living on the edge. Reserve funds help municipal governments meet future fiscal challenges. In addition, bond underwriters look at reserves as an indicator of fiscal responsibility, so a healthy reserve can increase credit ratings and decrease costs of local debt.

Fast Fact

The NLC report *City Fiscal Conditions in 2007* found that cities' ending balances or "reserves" were continuing to grow despite economic and fiscal challenges. In 2006, ending balances as a percentage of general fund expenditures averaged nearly 26 percent, which was an all-time high for the NLC survey.

Participatory Budgeting

The residents of your community are the primary customers for the services you fund in your annual budget. Engaging citizens in shaping the budget increases their trust and strengthens their connection with government. You can connect citizens to your budget development process in various ways:

- **Hold public hearings on the proposed budget.** Governing bodies generally convene hearings after they've analyzed and revised the chief executive's proposed budget, but well before they adopt it. You want to ensure that the budget the public is commenting on reflects the governing body's input, but you also want to allow time for further revisions.

- **Engage citizen advisory groups and neighborhood associations.** Organized groups that are familiar with government operations are great resources for soliciting input on your spending plan. Some citizen groups analyze the proposed budget in detail, focusing on areas of interest or expertise.

- **Regularly publicize information about your budgeting process and schedule.** Your government Web site can keep residents up-to-date on the budget process, and newsletters and other communication tools can raise its visibility. Media coverage of the budget can also be productive, so it is in your best interests to keep the media informed about the budget process.

Participatory budgeting goes beyond the traditional budget hearing to get citizen input. The success of participatory budget depends on

- **Early and open involvement:** To ensure meaningful input, engage residents early, provide broad access to budget information, and sustain the connections from start to finish. Make sure your budget calendar allows time for seeking and incorporating citizen input so that the engagement is genuine.

- **In-depth connections:** Establish budget advisory groups made up of knowledgeable citizens who understand community needs and can commit significant time to the review process. Single-interest or highly political picks can derail or discredit the entire process. By seeking participants who have a broad perspective and are willing to represent the entire community rather than a special interest, you are more likely to obtain high-quality input.

- **Accessible tools:** Understandable and easily accessible budget documents help citizens make useful contributions. An orientation session for volunteer committee members before they dive into budget review is helpful. Technology also enables you to provide up-to-the-minute information that can help encourage participation in your budget process.

- **Willingness to accept input:** Whether you're seeking input from traditional strategies such as surveys and public hearings, or from more in-depth connections such as budget advisory groups, it is important to weigh the input seriously and demonstrate that it has been considered.

Portland, Oregon (www.portlandonline.com), has five community budget advisers who work with elected officials and city staff throughout the process to ensure that the budget reflects community interests. The community advisers serve on budget teams that review sections of the budget in depth and make recommendations for revisions. In addition, the city has a community budget Web site to keep residents up-to-date on the budget process, invite them to upcoming meetings and forums, and let them see online the proposed budget and suggested amendments throughout the process.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Your Policies

Three valuable tools for evaluating policy effectiveness are

- Regular data collection from citizens
- Data analysis and comparison with established performance indicators
- Public reporting.

Data Collection

The first and last measure of good government is citizen satisfaction. Regular citizen surveys will help you assess policy effectiveness. Local governments can use regular written surveys as well as periodic telephone surveys to get data for assessing policy effectiveness, measuring results on agreed-upon priorities, and setting new program and spending priorities.

The National Citizen Survey™, developed by ICMA and the National Research Center, Inc., is a low-cost, tested, flexible, and efficient tool for surveying citizens to obtain their opinions on program planning, budgeting, goal setting,

Little Rock, Arkansas (www.littlerock.org), conducted a telephone survey to measure citizens' use of services and opinions about those services, as well as citizens' perceptions of the problems facing the city. The survey included questions about street conditions, garbage collection, sidewalks, street lighting, and other basic services. The Arkansas Institute of Government Survey Research conducted the survey and analyzed the results for the city.

Austin, Texas (www.ci.austin.tx.us), uses a comprehensive citizen survey that measures accomplishments on four major priorities: public safety; youth, family, and neighborhood vitality; sustainable community; and affordability. City departments develop the questions to measure the degree of importance that citizens assign to the priority areas, and to determine how well services in these priority areas are being delivered.

Bloomington, Minnesota (www.ci.bloomington.mn.us), annually publishes its *Corporate Report to the Community* focusing on the taxpayers' investment in the community and showing how well the government is performing. With charts and graphs, it provides detailed data on financial performance.

Coral Springs, Florida (www.coralsprings.org), incorporates performance measures into its state-of-the-city report. The report gives citizens an easy-to-read summary of strategic priorities, accomplishments, surveys results, and techniques for collecting the data that will be used to develop new polices and programs.

Sterling Heights, Michigan (www.ci.sterling-heights.mi.us), developed a community calendar that provides information on sixty-five key performance measures. The calendar format provides performance highlights throughout the year, and compares results with those of other jurisdictions.

and performance measurement. Visit www.icma.org for more information about The National Citizen Survey™.

While a formal survey may be conducted annually as part of your policy development and budgeting cycles, ongoing feedback tools, such as complaint tracking systems, focus groups on new programs, and community meetings, are also helpful.

Data Analysis and Benchmarking

The chief administrative officer and professional staff analyze data collected in annual surveys and other feedback systems, and report the results to the governing body. Benchmarking—comparing trends over time, or comparing locally collected data with indicators from similar cities—helps the leadership team identify emerging problems and find ways to solve them. The ICMA Center for Performance Measurement provides a variety of tools to support collection, analysis, and comparison of performance data.

Public Feedback

It is important to keep citizens in the loop on policy and program effectiveness. Written annual reports, state-of-the-city reports, and access to performance data let citizens know that their feedback is taken seriously and keep them informed about government effectiveness in carrying out priorities.

Recap

- A vision—a broad statement about what your community is or expects to be—defines your government's mission and provides a foundation for your team's policy work.

- Policy making means deciding what actions your government is going to take to carry out its mission.

- Setting goals and strategic priorities to guide policy decisions will keep you focused on the big picture and help the governing body manage its time more successfully.

- The annual budget is your most important annual policy statement.

- Involving citizens in the budget process through work sessions, public hearings, and citizen budget committees will increase trust, provide useful input, and produce a better budget.

- Evaluating policy effectiveness using both qualitative and quantitative measures will enhance future policy making.

Recommended Local Reading

- Current strategic plan
- Existing vision and mission statements
- Local government code
- Current priorities and strategies
- Most recent annual budget and capital improvement plan
- The comprehensive or master plan
- Local financial statements

Making Meetings Work

Democracy must mean more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for lunch.

—Benjamin Franklin

Much of the business of governing is carried out in meetings, including regular governing body meetings, work sessions, committee meetings, and public hearings.

Your local charter provides the framework for regular governing body meetings, including requirements for public announcements, voting quorums, minutes, and state laws that must be observed, such as open meeting laws and freedom of information laws.

Fast Fact

The first open records law was passed in Wisconsin shortly after Wisconsin became a state in 1848. The first open meeting law was passed in Florida in 1967. All states and the District of Columbia now have both open records laws that govern access to public documents and open meeting laws that define public meeting requirements and sanctions.

The rapid rise of open meeting laws in the 1970s—led by Florida's "sunshine law"—initially caused anxiety, but open government has become a positive way of life for today's public officials. Knowing what's in your state open meeting law is an important part of your information tool kit.

Beyond the legal requirements, factors contributing to successful meetings include

- Rules of procedure and protocols
- A well-planned agenda
- Committees and work sessions.

Open E-mail

When members of a leadership team communicate by e-mail, they must observe open records and open meeting laws. A California legal opinion concluded that members of a governing body who e-mail each other to develop a collective agreement on a scheduled action are violating the state open meeting law. E-mails sent by public officials are generally considered public communications and are covered under freedom of information laws. Many public officials include a statement at the bottom of their e-mails confirming that their e-mail communication is part of the public record.

Rules of Procedure and Protocols

Rules of procedure help you conduct public business in an orderly way. Protocols provide guidelines for governing body behavior and interaction in public settings. Combined, well-written rules of procedure and clear protocols that everyone agrees to follow provide a framework for successful governing body meetings.

One of the first acts that some new councils take after an election is to adopt existing rules and protocols to reestablish standards for working together. One of your first acts when you join the leadership team as a new member of the governing body should be to review all rules and protocols carefully and ask questions so that you become comfortable with the governing body's way of carrying out its business.

Rules of Procedure

Topics covered in governing body rules include

- The regular schedule for meetings, and provisions for calling special meetings
- Order of business, who prepares the agenda, and the deadline for delivery of materials to governing body members
- Procedures for modifying the published agenda for new or emergency items or for making any other post-publication changes
- Debate and voting procedures, such as how to resolve tie votes, when to use roll call votes, and how to record silent votes and abstentions
- Procedures for public participation in governing body meetings, including when public input is accepted, time limits for speaking, when and how to register to speak, whether advance notice is required, and opportunities to submit written statements
- Exceptions to the rules
- Parliamentary procedures that will be followed, and procedures for resolving any challenges to rulings by the chair.

Guiding Principles for Streamlined Parliamentary Rules

1. *Rules should establish order.* The first purpose of parliamentary procedure is to establish a framework for orderly meetings.

2. *Rules should be clear.* Simple rules lead to wider understanding and participation.

3. *Rules should be user-friendly.* The rules must be simple enough that citizens feel they have been able to participate in the process.

4. *Rules should enforce the will of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority.* The ultimate purpose of the rules is to encourage discussion and facilitate decision making. The rules must enable the majority to express itself and fashion a result, while permitting the minority to express itself (but not dominate) and fully participate in the process.

Adapted from *Rosenberg's Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century*

Many governing bodies rely on *Robert's Rules of Order* for parliamentary procedure. But *Robert's Rules* is complicated, detailed, and intended primarily for large legislative bodies. It can be frustrating to use. A governing body that gets tangled in parliamentary process doesn't make good decisions, which can undermine public confidence in government.

Adopting your own simpler parliamentary rules is fine—as long as those rules are clear, used consistently, and contribute to productive debate and action. It is useful to have streamlined parliamentary procedures reviewed by your local government attorney.

Sample Governing Body Code of Conduct

● Seek to understand one another's perspective.

● Seek diversity of ideas.

● Honor one another in public, and protect each other in their absence.

● Be tough on issues, soft on people.

● Focus on the issues, not on personalities.

● Seek honesty and integrity in all deliberations and interactions.

● Governing body direction to staff should be by consensus rather than by individual action.

● Once a decision is made, move on, bury disagreements, and expect staff to follow through as defined.

Protocols

Protocols focus on civility, courtesy, and decorum. Some governing bodies develop informal protocols to guide how they'll work together as a team and what constitutes acceptable behavior in public settings. Protocols may also cover the governing body's expectations for the behavior of local government staff and the public at meetings.

Formal protocols define both acceptable behavior and consequences for violations. For example, a governing body member who regularly violates the rules may be reprimanded or formally censured, or a citizen whose behavior is unacceptable may be barred from further testimony.

While it is difficult to legislate behavior, written, adopted, published, and accepted protocols provide a framework for positive and productive meetings.

Sometimes, the biggest challenge for the mayor or governing body chair is keeping discussion focused on the issue rather than on the person. That's why

Sunnyvale, California (www.sunnyvale.ca.gov), developed this checklist as part of its *Code of Conduct for Elected Officials* to help individual council members assess their behavior at public meetings.

☐ Will my decision/statement/action violate the trust, rights, or goodwill of others?

☐ If I have to justify my conduct in public tomorrow, will I do so with pride or shame?

☐ How would my conduct be evaluated by people whose integrity and character I respect?

☐ Even if my conduct is not illegal or unethical, is it done at someone else's painful expense?

☐ Is my conduct fair? Just? Morally right?

☐ If I were on the receiving end of my conduct, would I approve and agree, or would I take offense?

☐ Does my conduct give others reason to trust or distrust me?

☐ Am I willing to take an ethical stand when it is called for?

☐ Can I take legitimate pride in the way I conduct myself and the example I set?

☐ Do I listen and understand the views of others?

☐ Do I question and confront points of view in a constructive manner?

☐ Do I work to resolve differences and come to mutual agreement?

☐ Do I support others and show respect for their ideas?

☐ Will my conduct cause public embarrassment to someone else?

Palo Alto, California (www.cityofpaloalto.org), provides guidelines for council conduct with one another, with staff, and with other boards and commissions; staff conduct with the city council; and other procedural issues in its adopted *Council Protocols.* Specific protocols related to public meetings include the following:

- Use formal titles.
- Practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate.
- Honor the role of the presiding officer in maintaining order and equity.
- Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches.
- Be respectful of other people's time.

a rule against personal attacks that applies to both the governing body and the public is valuable. Personal attacks among governing body members or from a community activist, protestor, or gadfly interfere with decision making and, over the long run, discourage others from participating productively.

Members of the governing body set the standard for civility and decorum at the meeting by modeling expected behavior. You can't challenge or reprimand a disruptive citizen if disruption and personal attacks are common among governing body members. Written protocols set the framework for behavior. Good judgment and sensitivity to your public role make the difference.

A Well-Planned Agenda

If I had eight hours to chop down a tree,
I'd spend six sharpening my axe.

—Abraham Lincoln

Generally the chief administrative officer prepares the governing body agenda, working closely with the mayor/council chairman. The agenda usually balances routine items that a governing body must act on with issues related to the governing body's priorities. The more your priorities drive your agenda, the more effective your meetings will be.

To ensure that you are using your time most effectively, it may be useful for the chief administrative officer and the governing body to agree on criteria for organizing the agenda. Criteria to consider include

- **Policy impact/connection to priorities:** Issues that have significant policy implications, are directly related to your established priorities, and may have

a long-term impact on your community should get the most time on your agenda—and usually early in the meeting.

- **Citizen interest:** Particular issues of concern or interest to constituents should be accommodated on the agenda if possible.

- **Relevance to other issues:** Items that are related to or contingent on one another should be listed consecutively or under one heading.

- **Immediacy:** A deadline or crisis should be considered when arranging agenda items. Usually a well-planned approach to public business will cut down on the frequency of crises, but emergencies happen, and your agenda should take that into account.

Chief administrative officers recognize the importance of developing agendas that will support the governing body in carrying out the public's business. A carefully structured agenda and clear, complete, and concise backup materials create an environment for effective decision making.

While governing body agendas vary significantly from community to community, most include the same general information for all items: (1) the issue to be covered; (2) a brief background statement, including a staff recommendation; and (3) the action expected by the governing body. Practical tools such as **consent agendas,** which group routine issues under one action, and **fact sheets,** which summarize the scope of agenda items, can be helpful in managing time and information at a governing body meeting.

Successful meetings start with carefully planned agendas. The chief administrative officer and department staff support governing body decision making by planning agendas and providing both background reports and recommendations for action.

Committees and Work Sessions

Committees and full-group work sessions give elected officials time to explore complex issues in depth between regular meetings where decisions are made.

Fast Fact

More than 80 percent of local governing bodies use committees to examine policy issues, according to NLC's survey, compared with only 61 percent in 1979. Only 70 percent of smaller communities use committees, compared with 91 percent of larger cities (200,000 population or more).

Governing body committees are smaller groups that prepare issues for action by the full body. Ongoing or standing committees are often organized around major government functions—for example, public safety, community and eco-

nomic development, financial management, intergovernmental relations, land use and planning, transportation, energy, and the environment. Ad hoc committees are organized around urgent priorities or emerging challenges.

Governing body work sessions allow the entire governing body to study issues in more depth before making a decision.

The advantage of committees and work sessions is a more informal environment. Members can ask clarifying questions, discuss issues at length with expert staff, seek additional information, and prepare for formal decision making. Professional staff with relevant expertise are assigned to work closely with members in committees and work sessions.

Three caveats about committees and work sessions are important to remember:

1. Decisions are not made in committee meetings or work sessions.

2. Committee meetings don't preclude or eliminate public debate at formal meetings.

3. Most open meeting laws apply to committee meetings and governing body work sessions, which means that the public is invited.

Recap

- Policy making happens in meetings, so working together to make sure meetings enable good decision making is an essential part of your job.

- Open meeting laws guide the process of public decision making.

- Well-written rules of procedure and clear protocols that everyone agrees to follow provide a framework for successful governing body meetings.

- Successful meetings start with carefully planned agendas that help participants address the most important issues in a timely and productive way.

Recommended Local Reading

- State open meeting and freedom of information laws

- Adopted rules of procedure

- Recent governing body agendas and minutes

- *Roberts Rules of Order* or local parliamentary procedures

Communicating with the Public

You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across,
your ideas won't get anywhere.

—Lee Iacocca

You were elected by the public to serve the public. Communication encourages informed participation, builds community pride and satisfaction, and improves service. Good communication builds strong connections, and strong connections build a stronger community. In short, communication is a basic government obligation.

The following sections focus on

• Getting your message out

• Listening to the public

• Communicating in times of crisis.

Getting Your Message Out

A regular, consistent, and proactive communication strategy is the best way to connect citizens and their government. The more proactive you are, the less likely you will be to face inaccurate information that needs correcting or disconnected residents who feel out of the loop. Today's technology resources, supplemented by traditional communication vehicles, make it much easier to get your story out.

> *City Council strives to ensure that Danville citizens have complete confidence in their city government. The Council commits itself to providing clear direction, good planning, and stewardship. It works with city employees in a partnership to ensure that clear direction is coupled with high productivity and efficiency. City Council seeks the trust and confidence of its citizens by sharing successes, inviting participation and feedback, and reporting on performance.*
>
> From *Our Leadership Role,* Danville, Virginia (www.danville-va.gov)

Some widely used and successful tools for getting information out to citizens are

- A local government Web site and other forms of Internet communications
- Public access television
- Community newsletters and billing inserts
- Community or neighborhood meetings
- News releases.

In recent years, the Web has become the "must do" outreach for every community. However, not all residents have access to a computer or are comfortable using the Web to get information. Libraries and recreation centers can provide Internet-ready computers and friendly help to ensure that all residents have equal access to important information.

Equally important is redundancy: the local government should use a variety of methods to send the same message or information out to the public.

Communications Strategic Plan

A communications strategic plan takes a broad look at overall government communication tools and strategies. It can be a component of an overall strategic plan or a separate resource developed in close partnership with the staff who are responsible for carrying it out. Elements include

- Written communications to citizens
- Regular neighborhood interaction

Georgetown, Texas (www.georgetown.org), has a comprehensive media use policy that summarizes the purpose of and appropriate uses for all major communication tools, including city Web sites, a cable access channel, the *City Reporter* newsletter, and utility bill inserts. Identified uses for media tools are to inform Georgetown residents about city-sponsored events, news, programs, and services; city council discussions and decisions; board and commission actions; neighborhood association meetings; health and public safety issues; recreation programs and events; economic development initiatives and issues; and attractions, festivals, and performances.

Lancaster, California (www.cityoflancasterca.org), developed a communications strategic plan after a resident opinion survey showed that residents did not know what was going on in city government. For each communication vehicle, the plan identifies the purpose and goals, the targets for improvement, the timetable for action, and lead staff.

Award-Winning Web sites

The Center for Digital Government, a national research and advocacy institute on information technology policies and best practices in state and local government, annually recognizes city and county Web sites for innovation and user friendliness. For some new ideas, visit these ten award-winning Web sites:

Riverside, California (www.riversideca.gov)

Fort Collins, Colorado (www.fcgov.com)

Tampa, Florida (www.tampgov.net)

Columbia County, Georgia (www.columbiacountyga.gov)

Fulton County, Georgia (www.co.fulton.ga.us)

Louisville, Kentucky (www.louisvilleky.gov)

Oakland County, Michigan (www.oakgov.com)

Las Vegas, Nevada (www.lasvegasnevada.gov)

Monroe County, New York (www.monroecounty.gov)

Fairfax County, Virginia (www.fairfaxcounty.gov)

- Emergency communications
- Web site and Internet communications
- Public access television programming
- Customer service communications
- Media relations
- Marketing plans for economic development
- The look and feel of government communications—the local "brand"
- Staffing and resources to carry out the plan.

The ease of communication today and the variety of available tools make an overall strategy valuable. A communications strategic plan will help ensure thoughtful, complementary, and reliable communications.

Web site

A local government Web site is today's most important tool for providing up-to-date information and connecting citizens to services. A Web site provides easy access to a range of important resources—for example, the annual operating budget and capital improvement plan; goals and priorities; meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes; and frequently asked questions about the government.

Your Web site can also build strong community connections through **online services.** Citizens in many communities pay water bills and parking tickets, apply for permits, request services, or register for local recreational programs—all online.

Local government staff is responsible for developing and maintaining the Web site with advice and engagement from members of the governing body.

Internet Communications

The Internet provides a reliable way to get information out regularly. Some Internet tools are extensions of the local government Web site. Others may be used by individual elected officials as ways to communicate regularly with constituents. And still others create opportunities for citizens to connect with each other about community and neighborhood issues.

Understanding the range of resources is a good starting point. You should expect your local government staff to find the right Internet tools to carry out your communications strategy.

Fast Fact

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 72 percent of Americans aged 12 and older use the Internet. More than 90 percent of Internet users rely on e-mail, and 73 percent get news online. While the extent of use still decreases with age (87 percent of people aged 12–17 are regular Internet users vs. 21 percent of people over age 70), use of online tools for communication, information, and services is growing in all age groups.

Here are some examples of Internet communication tools.

- **E-newsletters** provide regular updates on specific topics without requiring citizens to go to the local government Web site—except to subscribe. An e-newsletter is usually written around a specific recurring topic or issue and sent only to citizens who register to receive it. Or an e-newsletter can supplement a regularly mailed community newsletter and be distributed to a broad citizen list.

- **Blast e-mails** are like e-newsletters but more spontaneous. A broad community e-mail list is used to get information out quickly to a large audience.

Lenexa, Kansas (www.ci.lenexa.ks.us/subscriptions/e-newsletters.html), offers thirteen e-newsletter options, such as *Neighborhood E-Watch, Business Town Talk, Planning Commission Agenda, Senior Programs, Special Events,* and *Clean Streams and Environment,* to help citizens get updates on favorite topics.

Georgetown, Texas (www.georgetown.org), provides RSS feeds from its Web site to connect citizens with regular sources of community news about, for example, tourism, the local school district, pets for adoption, library and recreation information, and the local university. The RSS section of the Georgetown Web site provides information about how to use an RSS feed and a link to a resource to set up an RSS reader.

- **E-mail lists** are discussion groups that allow two-way information exchange among registered participants. When an e-mail is addressed to the list, it goes to everyone on the list. Usually such lists focus on specific topics, and participants choose to subscribe so that they can share ideas with others with similar interests. **Community e-mail lists** provide online information exchange within neighborhoods around a range of issues—from where to take your dog for grooming to concerns about neighborhood traffic. To keep connected to your constituents and their concerns, it's a good idea to join community e-mail lists.

- **RSS ("really simple syndication")** provides a way to distribute community news broadly from multiple Web sites to anyone who registers on one site. Like e-newsletters, RSS provides automatic access to information so that the reader doesn't have to check the Web site regularly to get the news.

- A **blog ("Web log")** is an online running commentary on issues and events. "Owned" and written by one person, it may allow two-way communication. The advantage of a blog is that it is informal, somewhat unstructured, and spontaneous. The challenge is maintaining it. If you decide to start a blog, you need to keep it fresh and up-to-date.

The Internet is a great resource for communicating regularly with citizens and providing quick, easily accessible information. However, there are some cautions to keep in mind. All e-mail communications, whether on a personal e-mail

Santa Paula, California (www.ci.santa-paula.ca.us), has a city blog maintained by the city manager at the request of the city council. The blog includes a *suggestion box* where residents can offer ways to run the city better, and a section for posting questions about city government. A *blog comment policy* defines the parameters for posting citizen comments to "ensure civil discussion while encouraging diverse perspectives." It prohibits personal attacks, profanity or racial slurs, support of or opposition to an individual official, campaigning, and comments unrelated to the initial blog issue.

account or through a blog or e-mail list, are considered public information. So it is important to approach these tools with the same thoughtful reflection that you use in a public meeting.

Comments and complaints posted on a blog or e-mail list sometimes prompt— or even seem to demand—an instant reaction. But it is usually not a good idea to respond instantly. Stop, think it through, and weigh your options and your words before responding.

Government Access Television

The 1984 Cable Franchise Policy and Communications Act requires all cable television companies to support public, educational, and governmental (PEG) programming. Government access television is a local government resource for a range of uses, such as broadcasting public meetings, providing educational pro-gramming, and making emergency announcements.

Technology advances make it possible to broadcast governing body meetings both on your public access channel and through your Web site. While viewership of public access television channels varies, your government channel provides a valuable resource to bring the governing body into living rooms and to provide in-depth information about specific programs and services.

Community Newsletters and Billing Inserts

A newsletter published regularly and distributed in print format through bulk mailing, as well as in electronic format by e-mail blast and on the local government Web site, is a powerful tool for citizen outreach. Whether the news-letter is produced bi-weekly, monthly, or quarterly, it gets information and activi-ties in front of residents, and it can direct people to your Web site.

Bee Cave, Texas (www.beecavetexas.gov), publishes a periodic newsletter called *Bee Cave Buzz*. The *Buzz* includes a message from the mayor, highlights of the issues on the council's work agenda, a financial update, news from inside city hall and around the community, and a calendar of upcoming events. It is mailed to city residents and posted on the city Web site. The newsletter encourages residents to visit the Web site regularly for up-to-date news and information about city services.

Rockville Reports is published monthly by the city of **Rockville, Maryland** (www.rockvillemd.gov), and mailed to all city residents. The newspaper-style newsletter is also posted and archived on the city Web site. It includes news about city activities and governing body decisions, in addition to schedules for events during the month and programming on the government access television channel.

Elected officials in **Lakewood, Colorado** (www.lakewood.org), regularly sched-ule "morning chats" throughout the community to connect with their con-stituents. The meetings, which are held in libraries, neighborhood restaurants, and recreation centers, usually on Saturday mornings, offer opportunities for citizens to meet and greet Lakewood council members and discuss neighbor-hood concerns and citywide issues.

Flyers with important community information inserted with property tax or utility bills can be useful since you know residents open their bills. Time-sensitive information, such as fall leaf collection schedules or winter snow removal plans, work particularly well as billing inserts. A flyer should be very brief and should include your Web site address and a telephone number for more information.

Community Meetings

Technology will never replace face-to-face contact. When you as an elected offi-cial reach out to residents on a regular basis—not just when you're seeking their input on a new idea or trying to gain their support for a specific solution—you strengthen their connection with their government. Holding meetings in neighbor-hoods rather than always convening in city hall also builds stronger bonds.

News Releases

Newspapers, radio, and local television stations are a major source of information for many people. Reporters and editors will generally decide what is "news" in your community, but you can shape that coverage by distributing news releases highlighting important programs, services, and results. Your professional staff will write the news release while you provide quotes and are available for follow-up interviews to strengthen your message.

Decatur, Georgia (www.decaturga.com), offers a five-session course annually to educate up to forty members of the community about how the city works, who is responsible for what, and how citizens can make a difference. Two-hour classes are held once a week in different municipal buildings; in addition, there are special tours such as a recent Smart Growth Walking Tour. Goals of the pro-gram are to increase the number of informed and involved citizens and to make local government more accessible to the community. As one recent graduate said, *"It was awesome. It makes it a lot easier to write that tax check."*

Listening to the Public

The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them.

—Gen. Colin Powell

Accessible, easy-to-use tools for getting information *in* from your constituents are an equally important part of your communications tool kit. Opportunities for both **spontaneous interactions** based on the citizen's agenda and **structured, scheduled input** built around your agenda encourage participation and feedback.

Spontaneous Interaction

Web sites, 311 nonemergency telephone and e-mail lines, customer service complaint and resolution systems, and personal connections are typical methods for spontaneous interactions. Your input systems will be most useful if they are visible and easy to use, and if members of the leadership team are available and responsive.

Online request systems let citizens ask questions, report problems, and moni-tor the status of their requests. A comprehensive communications management system helps the government manage and track requests for assistance and

Ask Arvada in **Arvada, Colorado** (www.arvada.org), and *Minnetonka Mike* in **Minnetonka, Minnesota** (www.eminnetonka.com), are comprehensive online communication management systems. Citizens in these cities can access city hall 24/7 to get information, request service, and report local problems. *Minnetonka Mike* invites citizens to "let us know how we can better serve you, help us discover areas for improvement, and tell us what you like about the city and its services." *Ask Arvada* invites general questions around government issues and services, and has three special "ask" categories: *Ask the Mayor, Ask the City Council,* and *Ask the Traffic Guy.*

Columbus, Georgia (www.columbusga.gov), has a Citizens Service Center on its Web site that summarizes options for reporting local problems and request-ing service by phone, by e-mail, or online. It includes a list of concerns that residents might notice around the community—for instance, a stop sign on the ground, debris in the roadway, tree limbs hanging in the street—and urges citi-zens to use the 311 nonemergency system to make sure the problem gets fixed. The service center also highlights the difference between 311 and 911 this way: ***for a burning question, use 311; a burning building, dial 911.***

comments. The system also supports long-range planning by letting you know which issues and concerns recur most often. Your job as an elected official is to be sure that

- There is a reliable customer service system in place

- You get regular summaries of questions, complaints, and requests for service both to monitor responsiveness and to identify potential policy issues

- The governing body is available to resolve issues that have not been addressed through normal administrative procedures.

The most important component of your citizen reporting system is feedback/ closure. Someone needs to take responsibility for ensuring that the complaint or problem is addressed and that the citizen knows the outcome.

Structured Input

Methods of getting structured input include public hearings and public input at regular governing body meetings, community workshops, citizen advisory groups, and surveys.

A **public hearing** is a separate event—sometimes required by law—to get reactions to a specific issue or planned action. For example, most local governments hold public hearings to get citizen comments before adopting the annual budget.

Citizen comment periods at regular meetings allow public comment on a wide range of issues. To increase the value of public comment periods, it is helpful to define and publicize procedures for participation. Some local governments also provide guidelines to help residents make successful presentations at public meetings.

You can use your outgoing communication tools—Web site, community newsletters, billing inserts, and news releases—to announce the dates and purpose for upcoming public hearings, and to encourage participation.

While public hearings are among the most frequently used methods of getting citizen input, many elected officials rate them as one of the least effective approaches. The citizen with an ax to grind is sometimes the most regular presenter, and this common situation creates stress for the governing body and may discourage other citizens from participating. Because public hearings are often required by law and because many citizens expect to have opportunities to provide input at governing body meetings, the challenge is to try to make those opportunities useful and productive.

Some ways to maximize the value of public hearings include

- **Defining and publicizing the purpose of the meeting:** Public hearings are generally used for advice, guidance, and direction from the public. If that is the purpose, let everyone know that the governing body will listen carefully, take notes, accept copies of formal presentations and use that input for a future decision-making session. Other forms of public participation such as

Fort Collins, Colorado (www.fcgov.com), has a section of its Web site called *Your Voice* that invites citizens to participate in governing body decision making. It highlights upcoming governing body decisions, provides information about issues and action to date, and defines when and how citizens can provide comments.

Mountain View, California (www.mountainview.gov), has a *Council Watchers Guide* that provides information about how citizens can get involved in governing body meetings, including when meetings are scheduled, where to get agendas and staff reports, how the council conducts its business, and how to participate.

Sunnyvale, California (www.sunnyvale.ca.gov), offers *How to Make Your Council Chambers Presentations More Effective,* a guide that provides participation procedures; suggestions on how to make a successful presentation, including recommended materials to use and technology resources that are available to presenters; and a contact in city hall for further guidance.

workshops, community meetings, and special advisory committees are more useful if your primary purpose is to educate, persuade, or engage citizens in joint decision making.

• **Clarifying procedures and time limits:** Setting and enforcing specific boundaries will help the chair manage the process.

• **Anticipating the audience and planning for it:** Advance sign-up will help the chief administrator and governing body prepare for the session. If a large turnout is expected, consider holding multiple hearings to accommodate everyone and manage the participation. Overflow crowds with citizens standing in the hall instantly create tension. If you know your turnout will exceed the capacity of your governing body chambers, move the hearing to a place that can accommodate everyone comfortably.

• **Providing easy-to-understand background information in advance and at the meeting:** Background information prepared by the chief administrator and expert staff helps get participants on the same page—even if they don't agree with the direction.

• **Being prepared together:** The council chair or mayor should make sure that the right substantive experts are available to answer questions, should be personally familiar with the details of the issue, should plan in advance how to manage the meeting, and should make sure that all members of the governing body understand and abide by the agreed-upon procedures.

Community workshops that are designed to get information *out* can easily become community workshops to get information *in* on specific issues. The approach is the same: governing body members and expert staff go out to neighborhoods to meet with all interested residents about government business. You can engage and inform the community while getting their reactions, suggestions, guidance, and support before you make a policy decision. A series of well-planned and well-publicized workshops provide two-way education: citizens learn more about a pending policy issue, and the governing body and staff get input on citizen concerns and preferences to guide decision making.

Invitational meetings bring together smaller groups for in-depth discussion and guidance. Local governments use advisory committees for invitation-only meetings. As an alternative, a few neighborhood meetings with invited community leaders can provide useful input without creating a specific committee.

Focus groups are invitation-only meetings involving fewer than fifteen people; their purpose is to gather reactions to a specific idea or program. Popular for "market research," focus groups work best with a skilled facilitator who uses a prepared list of questions to guide the discussion. For the most reliable information, it's good to use multiple focus groups involving different cross-sections of citizens who discuss the same questions with the same facilitator.

Appointed citizen committees with a clear mission generate good ideas, encourage productive participation, educate citizens about public policy, and broaden ownership for governing body decisions. Your local government may have both standing committees that have a continuing annual mission and special committees that are created to respond to a specific issue or challenge. The governing body usually appoints members of citizen advisory committees, taking into account

- Expertise in the area that the committee works on
- Balanced community representation
- An expressed interest to serve and willingness to participate actively and fairly.

If you are newly elected to the governing body, be sure to get a list of all existing advisory groups, their current members, and members' terms of office.

Neighborhood advisory groups engage residents where they live and broaden opportunities for communication and connections. Members of the advisory groups are generally elected by the neighborhoods they represent and view themselves as spokespersons for the neighborhoods that elect them. Although connected to the government, the groups tend to operate independently. They provide good venues for workshops on important policy issues. Residents sometimes go to a neighborhood advisory meeting to register a complaint before, or instead of, going to the governing body meeting; doing so can lead to an early resolution of problems.

Burlington, Vermont (www.ci.burlington.vt.us), has seven elected neighborhood planning assemblies that were established to encourage citizen participation in local government. Working as neighborhood advocacy groups, the assemblies improve communication between citizens and city government through regular meetings where residents learn about issues that affect them and advise the city about their concerns and needs. Typical assembly topics include ballot questions and candidate forums, development projects in the neighborhood, and updates on street and sidewalk repair projects. Each assembly elects representatives to a citywide board that approves neighborhood grant applications for improvement projects.

The **Columbia Council of Neighborhoods (CCN)** (www.columbianeighborhoods.org) is a volunteer, community-based organization that coordinates the activities of more than eighty neighborhood groups in **Columbia, South Carolina.** The council's mission is to improve communication between diverse neighborhood groups, and to serve as a link between neighborhood groups and city officials. The Columbia Zoning Board, Planning Commission, and city council routinely request input from CCN and its members.

Your community probably has a range of citizen and neighborhood groups with no formal connection to the government—for example, the League of Women Voters, service groups, neighborhood associations, political caucuses, and special-interest groups. These groups can provide valuable connections to residents who might not otherwise get involved in government business but have perspectives worth listening to. As an active community resident before your election, you may already have strong ties to some of these groups.

Citizen surveys help assess policy effectiveness and provide reliable feedback on what residents think of current services, what new services they are willing to pay for, and what services they could live without. Citizen surveys also help you refine your public relations program by identifying areas where public perceptions of services are out of sync with the leadership team's perceptions. Perhaps most important, surveys help you connect with a broader audience that may never come to a meeting, serve on a committee, or register a personal complaint.

Your systems and methods for outgoing and incoming communication should be broad and diverse to maximize the connections with the people you serve and contribute to better decisions for the entire community.

Communicating in Times of Crisis

A community crisis tests your communication skills and processes as well as your leadership team's capacity. Whether it is a natural disaster such as a tornado, a

violent incident such as a school shooting, or a political crisis such as a major financial shortfall, your governing body's ability to work together and speak with one voice will be pushed to the limit. A crisis can lead to confusion, conflict, and controversy. A good communications plan is important to manage and minimize all three.

Your ability to respond depends on having a comprehensive emergency response plan in place—and on being familiar with all aspects of that plan. From a communication perspective, your biggest challenges will be

- Speaking with one voice
- Keeping the public informed
- Managing the media.

Speak with One Voice

In times of crisis, your citizens will look for one familiar and reliable voice that can provide clear and consistent information. Your emergency response plan should define communication roles, including who the primary spokesperson will be.

The mayor is generally the lead spokesperson for the government during a crisis, working in partnership with the chief administrative officer and other experts who provide details as needed. In many cases, the mayor will defer to top staff to answer technical questions and provide detailed guidance. When more than one person uses the microphone, messages should be consistent, clear, and supportive. That means making sure that anyone who might be asked to comment or may fill in as a spokesperson during the crisis is kept up-to-date on the latest news. Regular briefings for key leaders between public statements will help keep everyone on the same page.

In a political crisis, speaking with one voice is tough. The public needs to see a governing body working together to solve problems rather than publicly disagreeing.

Keep the Public Informed

Whether you are the spokesperson or a member of the team relaying the words of the spokesperson, present what you know as soon as you know it. Sometimes announcing that you don't have all the information yet is better than saying nothing at all, which opens the door for even less informed sources to try to fill the gaps.

Think about the many times you have watched other public officials deal with major crises in a national media spotlight. Honesty, confidence, and commitment to get through the crisis generally go over best. That demeanor is hard to sustain when your community has been leveled by a tornado. But that's what residents expect from their local leaders.

Tips for Working with the Media

- *Coordinate closely with your chief administrative officer or press office if your local government has one.* Generally, the city staff is the primary point of daily contact with the media and can provide support and guidance to elected officials who are dealing with the media.

- *Always be prepared when talking with a reporter.* If a reporter calls you directly, find out what he or she is looking for, and buy some time to coordinate with key staff and prepare yourself for the interview.

- *Focus on a few key points and stay with them.* Three key messages about an important issue with examples of how the issue will affect residents will help get your message across. Even if the questions move in different directions, try to refocus the conversation to your three points.

- *"No comment" is never a good response.* It suggests that you know something that you aren't sharing. If you don't have the information or can't provide a complete answer to the question at that moment, say so.

- *Be responsive to build a positive relationship.* Respect the reporter, the deadlines, and the job of covering a local government. While relations with the media are sometimes contentious, start from the assumption that you can build a positive relationship by being open, responsive, available, and respectful. Never ignore a call from a reporter. If you aren't the right contact, make sure someone from your local government returns the call.

- *Assume that everything is on the record and that whatever you say will be published.* While many reporters use categories such as not-for-attribution, background, and off-the-record, the best way to talk to a reporter is to assume that nothing is really off the record.

- *Consider using op-eds and letters to the editor to communicate local views.* Op-eds and letters to the editor are good ways to get your message out about a new program, service, or challenge in the community.

Manage the Media

The media can be a good resource for sharing information during a crisis. A natural disaster involving emotions and shared loss offers a better chance for a positive media relationship than a political crisis. In either case, however, reaching out to the media rather than avoiding it will produce better results.

Press conferences and briefings with local media at regularly scheduled intervals will help you manage the information and your time.

Depending on the magnitude of the crisis, the arrival of national media can have a major impact on your communications strategy. In the aftermath of major

storms, local officials say the onslaught of national media constantly seeking interviews and updates puts enormous pressure on local leaders, particularly in small communities with limited staff resources or media experience. Your emergency communications response plan should anticipate the possibility of national media and establish procedures for managing those resources positively and productively. Designating one senior staff person who has communications experience to serve as the primary media contact, and scheduling specific times for regular media briefings, will help you manage national media presence and get reliable information out.

Political crises present different challenges in dealing with the media because the facts are less clear and the opportunities for speculation, placing blame, and creating conflict are much higher. Aggressive media may nurture and exploit speculation, blame, and leadership conflicts.

As a local leader, you need to keep your eye on your bottom lines—solving the problem, speaking with one voice, and keeping the public informed with whatever facts are available. Use the same tools you use for communicating positive information: carefully worded news releases, briefings that provide factual updates, and thoughtful and timely responses to reporters' questions.

Recap

- Communicating with the public is a government obligation. Good communication builds strong connections with citizens, and strong connections build a strong community.

- Successful communication goes two ways. It includes regular and diverse approaches to getting your message out, and equally regular and diverse approaches to getting input from the public.

- Technology facilitates local government communication, but it must be balanced with other communication tools to avoid widening the digital divide.

Recommended Local Reading

- Your local government Web site from your perspective as a local leader

- Recent community newsletters and news releases

- Mandates and membership lists for existing committees that the governing body appoints

- A list of other community groups that interact with the government, including their key leaders

Learning About Professional Managers

Key Facts about Professional Managers

Life, Well Run

LIFE, WELL RUN

KEY FACTS ABOUT PROFESSIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS

The Basics

What is a professional local government manager?

A professional local government manager is an appointed administrator hired to serve the mayor, elected governing body, and community. A professional manager is similar the chief executive officer of a corporation.

Do all city, town, and county governments have managers with professional training in public administration?

No. Elected officials manage some local governments.

How many cities, towns, and counties are served by professional local government managers?

Professional managers oversee the day-to-day operations of more than 59 percent of cities and towns with a population of 2,500 and over, and 27 percent of counties across America.

What are professional local government managers called?

You can recognize them by many titles: city manager, town administrator, county executive to name a few.

How are professional local government managers hired?

Usually, the jurisdiction's elected officials hire the manager through a recruitment process they develop, or by promoting a deputy manager.

Why are professional local government managers hired?

The elected governing body hires a manager to implement their policies and programs and oversee the day-to-day business of the govern-ment in an ethical, transparent manner.

Are professional managers political appointees?

No. Professional managers are non-partisan and non-political, dedicated to the overall well-being of the community. They are committed to fair use of public resources and respect the rights and responsibilities of both elected officials and residents.

What kind of education and training do they have?

Nearly 65 percent of the managers surveyed by ICMA (the International City/County Management Association) in 2012 indicated they had earned a masters degree, usually in public administration, business, public policy, or some other advanced degree.

Demographics

What is the average tenure of a city, town, or county manager?

Just over seven years, according to ICMA's 2012 State of the Profession Survey.

How much experience do most managers have in local government management?

Twenty years, according to the same survey.

How many managers are women?

Roughly 16 percent of ICMA Member CAOs (Chief Appointed Officers) are women.

What is the racial and ethnic makeup of professional managers?

In 2012, 95.5 percent of respondents to ICMA's State of the Profession survey indicated that they were Caucasian; 2.9 percent African American; .3 percent Asian American; .7 percent Native American; and .7 percent other.

ICMA *Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

What is the average age of professional local government managers?

As of 2012, only 11 percent of professional local government managers were 40 OR younger and only 1 percent were under 30.

Duties, Responsibilities, and Skills

Exactly what do professional local government managers do?

A manager's responsibilities can vary from community to community, but they will include a combination of:

- Working with elected officials to develop and implement policies and programs
- Managing the day-to-day operations of the local government staff
- Using community values and rigorous program evaluation to make choices based on priorities in times of tight budgets, as well as finding creative solutions to meet needs that might otherwise go unmet.
- Coordinating and creating the complex budgets and materials necessary for local governments to apply for bonds and achieve the best-possible bond rating. The better the bond rating, the lower the interest rate taxpayers pay.
- Coordinating the delivery of services such as police, fire, sanitation, street repairs, and upkeep of parks and facilities
- Involving residents, businesses, civic groups, and other members of the community in building communities they're proud to call home

Ensuring that laws and policies are enforced fairly throughout the community

What kind of knowledge and skills do managers need?

Just as a manager's responsibilities may vary from community to community, so, too, do the knowledge and skills s/he needs for the job. They can include:

- Administration—Supervising people, budgets, and projects
- Leadership—Bringing a community-wide perspective, meeting today's needs while planning for tomorrow's, promoting excellence and innovation
- Finances—Ensuring the cost effectiveness of programs, balancing budgets, and securing the financial health of the community

- Management—Mediating, negotiating, encouraging inclusiveness, and consensus building
- Ethics—Commitment to accountability and the highest ethical standards

Compensation

How is the compensation of professional local government managers determined?

It's determined by the elected governing body and should be based on the position requirements, the complexity of the job, the leadership needed, labor market conditions, cost of living in the community, and the organization's ability to pay.

What is the general range of salaries?

ICMA's 2016 report, "CAO Salary and Compensation: The Big Picture," finds the median salary reported for chief appointed officers is $129,062 annually (meaning that half the respondents earn more and half earn less). The lowest median salary reported was $63,985 in Maine; the highest was $261,000 in California. Of course, as with most executive jobs, the salary figure is arrived at by weighing the complexities of the job, the size of the budget the manager would need to manage, the skill set needed to do the job well, and the wage the government can afford.

What other types of compensation can managers receive?

Managers' compensation is commensurate with that of executives of any similarly sized businesses in that it may include items such as pension or retirement, health insurance, etc., but generally it will be less than in the private sector.

Terms of Service and Severance

What kind of job security do managers have?

Local government managers are typically considered at-will employees and can be terminated without cause at the discretion of the governing body or mayor.

Are they eligible to receive a severance package if they're terminated?

It depends on the employment agreement or contract they negotiate. ICMA's 2016 survey found that 90 percent of managers are eligible to receive severance pay, the amount of which varies mostly based on tenure. In line with standard business practices, the most common amount of severance pay is about six months.

Professional Local Government Management: The Benefits to Your Municipality

Life, Well Run

Professional Local Government Management

The Benefits to Your Municipality

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

Political Leadership and Professional Management in Today's Cities and Towns

Hiring a professional administrator, appointed by the city or town's governing body, is a trend on the rise in municipal government. Historically, many cities and towns were governed by commissions, councils, or boards whose members had both legislative and executive responsibilities. This system functioned effectively when municipal government was smaller and limited in scope and complexity. With the expansion of the responsibilities of cities and towns however, the policy-making demands of governing bodies greatly increased, as did the need for technical competence in the management of the operation and delivery of services. Today's elected board members can better fulfill their legislative or policy-making roles and maintain their overall control of service delivery by delegating the day-to-day management of the municipality to an appointed professional administrator.

Making the Change to Professional Management

Employing a professional manager or administrator frees elected officials from the administration of daily operations and gives them time to focus on the policy issues that will guide the future of the community. It empowers elected officials to provide leadership, develop a vision for the community, determine what services to provide citizens, lobby the state legislature on the community's behalf, and communicate and forge new relationships with constituents. The professional manager, appointed by the governing body, oversees the day-to-day operation and the implementation of policy.

Before a professional manager or administrator can be hired, a municipality's structure of government must be modified to provide for the position. The process of creating a position of city or town manager or administrator can vary from state to state. Some municipalities have the authority to act on their own initiative in that they can adopt local ordinances, laws, or resolutions to create the position of city manager or administrator. In states where municipalities may write their own charter under home-rule provisions, a number of municipalities have taken advantage of that opportunity to create a professional administrator position. Some states have enacted statutes providing for alternative forms or optional charters for local governments to adopt. Lastly, structural change can also be accomplished in some states by obtaining charters through special legislation adopted by the state legislative body.

What Value Does a Professional Manager Bring to a Community?

Professional managers bring value to a community because they:

- Work in partnership with elected officials to develop sound approaches to community challenges by bringing together resources to make the right things happen and produce results that matter

- Bring a community-wide perspective to policy discussions and strive to connect the past and future while focusing on the present. They help the governing body develop the long-term vision for the community that provides a framework for policy development and goal setting

- Promote ethical government through commitment to a set of ethical standards that goes beyond those required by law

- Encourage inclusion and build consensus among diverse interests (including those of elected officials, the business community, and citizens) by focusing on the entire community rather than the centralized interests of one or two individuals

- Promote equity and fairness by ensuring that services are fairly distributed and that administrative decisions (such as hiring and contracting) are based on merit rather than favoritism

- Develop and sustain organizational excellence and promote innovation. Professional managers focus relentlessly on efficient and equitable service delivery, policy implementation, and evaluation. They align the local government's administrative systems with the values, mission, and policy goals defined by the community and elected officials.

How Your Municipality Would Benefit from Hiring a Professional Administrator

The appointed manager or administrator is charged with carrying out the policies established by the elected officials and with delivering public services efficiently, effectively, and equitably. Elected officials, in turn, have more time to concentrate on creating a vision for the community's future.

- Day-to-day operations are managed by a professional who is educated and trained in current city and town management practices, state and federal laws and mandates, and cost-effective service delivery techniques

- Responsiveness to citizens is enhanced by centralizing administrative accountability in an individual appointed by the elected governing body

- The professional manager or administrator brings to the communities they serve technical knowledge and experience, academic training, management expertise, and a dedication and commitment to public service.

Ethical Conduct: Honoring the Public Trust

City and town managers or administrators who are members of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) are bound by its Code of Ethics, which states that every member of the organization shall act with integrity in all personal and professional matters so that they will merit the respect and trust of elected officials, employees, and the public. This stringently enforced Code specifies 12 ethical principles of personal and professional conduct, including dedication to the cause of good government. ICMA members believe in the effectiveness of representative democracy and the value of government services provided equitably to residents within a community. ICMA members are also committed to standards of honesty and integrity that go beyond those required by the law. For more information, contact ICMA or visit http://icma.org/ethics.

Responsiveness to Citizens

City and town managers or administrators are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the elected legislative body. They generally do not have guaranteed terms of office or tenure. They are evaluated based on their responsiveness to the elected legislative body and to the community and on their ability to provide efficient and effective services. If the administrator is not responsive to the elected officials, he or she may be terminated at any time. In that sense, the manager or administrator's responsiveness is tested daily.

How to Hire a Professional Manager or Administrator

1. Consider your municipality's unique demands and needs

Many managers and administrators have studied local government management at the graduate level and have held positions of increasing authority. Beyond the basic education and experience requirements of the position, you should develop a job description that encompasses your expectations and outlines measurable objectives that you want to accomplish. You should also develop a management profile of the administrator that matches your expectations.

ICMA can offer your municipality materials to facilitate this process. ICMA's *Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator* contains tips on recruiting applicants, determining finalists, and interviewing techniques. To locate a downloadable copy of this document, go to the ICMA JobCenter (jobs.icma.org).

2. Begin your search

Determine whether you want to conduct your own search or work with an executive recruitment firm. Prepare and place your advertisements in publications that will attract the most qualified local government candidates such as the *ICMA Newsletter*, the ICMA JobCenter, and/or state association publications.

3. Make the selection

- Review résumés and identify potential candidates based on their experience and the criteria you developed earlier
- Select the top candidates and schedule interviews with your evaluation panel
- Upon reaching a decision, negotiate the terms and conditions of employment with your new manager or administrator and formalize a written agreement
- At this time, it is important to develop mutually agreed-upon goals and establish an annual review process through which the elected body and the manager or administrator can discuss performance.

Resources

International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002-4201
Phone: 202-289-ICMA
Fax: 202-962-3500
Website: www.icma.org

The International City/County Management
Association (ICMA) promotes excellence in local
government through professional management.
ICMA provides an information clearinghouse,
technical assistance, and training and professional
development to nearly 9,000 chief appointed
administrators, assistant administrators, and other
individuals throughout the world. To obtain an
informational packet on the benefits of professional
city or town management, visit ICMA's website at
icma.org/formofgovt or email Jared Dailey, Assistant
Program Manager, at jdailey@icma.org.

National Civic League (NCL)

1145 Market Street, Suite 300
Denver, CO 80202-1728
Phone: 303-571-4343
Fax: 303-571-4404
Website: www.ncl.org
Email: ncl@ncl.org

The National Civic League is a nonpartisan
citizens' organization founded in 1895. Its purpose
is to serve as a clearinghouse for information on
methods of improving state and local government;
to encourage citizen participation in state and local
government; and to provide guides, model charters
and laws on specific local government topics. The
Model City Charter was specifically prepared to give
municipalities a general plan of structuring their local
government based on the principles of the council-
manager form. For more information about National
Civic League publications, visit www.ncl.org. Several
publications are also available through ICMA's online
bookstore at http://bookstore.icma.org.

PROFESSIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT: THE BENEFITS TO YOUR MUNICIPALITY

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

Hiring a Professional Manager

Life, Well Run

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Hiring a Professional Local Government Manager

Elected officials can better fulfill their legislative or policy-making roles by delegating the management of the municipality to an appointed professional administrator.

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The Benefits of Professional Management

- The appointed manager or administrator is charged with carrying out the policies established by the elected officials, and with delivering public services efficiently, effectively, and equitably. Elected officials, in turn, have more time to concentrate on creating a vision for the community's future.

- Day-to-day operations are managed by a professional who is educated and trained in current local government management practices, state and federal laws and mandates, and cost-effective service delivery techniques.

- Responsiveness to citizens is enhanced by centralizing administrative accountability in an individual appointed by the elected governing body. Local government managers or administrators are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the elected legislative body. They generally do not have guaranteed terms of office or tenure. They are evaluated based on their responsiveness to the elected legislative body and community, and on their ability to provide efficient and effective services. If the administrator is not responsive to the elected officials, he/she may be terminated at any time. In that sense, the manager's or administrator's responsiveness is tested daily.

- Professional managers or administrators bring technical knowledge, experience, academic training, management expertise, and dedication to public service.

Duties of an Appointed Manager or Administrator

- Carries out policies adopted by the elected officials.
- Manages local government services, which may include public works, public safety, planning and economic development, parks and recreation, libraries, youth services, resource recovery and recycling, and utilities.
- Prepares a comprehensive annual budget and capital improvement program.

- Ensures fiscal responsibility and modern accounting practices.
- Develops performance measurement systems for local government services.
- Applies for and administers federal, state, and private foundation grant funding.
- Recruits, hires, and supervises the workforce of the local government, including key department heads.
- Prepares council or board meeting agenda materials.
- Develops long-range plans with guidance from elected officials and assists in the achievement of common goals and objectives.
- Facilitates the flow of ideas and information between and among elected officials, employees, and citizens.

Ethical Conduct: Honoring the Public Trust

ICMA members are committed to standards of honesty and integrity that go beyond those required by law. Local government managers or administrators who are members of ICMA agree to abide by its Code of Ethics, which specifies 12 principles of personal and professional conduct, including dedication to the cause of good government. ICMA members believe in the effectiveness of representative democracy and the value of government services provided equitably to all residents of their communities. The Code is enforceable by a confidential peer review process.

How to Hire a Professional Manager or Administrator

First Steps

Before a professional manager or administrator can be hired, a local government's structure of government must be modified to provide for the position. The process of creating a position of manager or administrator can vary from state to state.

- Some local governments have the authority to act on their own initiative to adopt local ordinances, laws, or resolutions to create the position of manager or administrator appointed by the elected governing body.
- In states where local governments may write their own charter under home-rule provisions, a number of them have taken advantage of that opportunity to create a professional administrator position.
- Some states have enacted statutes providing for alternative forms or optional charters for local governments to adopt.
- In some states, structural change can take place by obtaining charters through special legislation adopted by the state legislative body.

Consider your municipality's unique demands and needs

Many managers and administrators have studied local government management at the graduate level and have held positions of increasing authority.

- Beyond the basic education and experience the position requires, you should develop a job description that outlines your expectations and the measurable objectives you want to accomplish.
- You should also develop a profile of the administrator who will best serve your community's needs.

ICMA can help your local government facilitate this process. ICMA's Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator (download below) contains tips on recruiting applicants, determining finalists, and interviewing techniques.

Begin your search

- Determine whether you want to conduct your own search or work with an executive recruitment firm.
- Prepare and place advertisements in publications that will attract the most qualified local government candidates, such as *Leadership Matters* (the ICMA Newsletter), ICMA JobCenter, and/or state association publications.

Make the selection

- Review resumes and identify potential candidates based on their experience and your criteria.
- Select the top candidates and schedule interviews with your evaluation panel.
- Upon reaching a decision, negotiate the terms and conditions of employment with your new manager or administrator and formalize a written agreement.
- At this time, it is important to develop mutually agreed-upon goals and establish an annual review process through which the elected body and the manager or administrator can discuss performance.

Downloads

Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator

Hiring a Professional Manager

Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator

Life, Well Run

Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator

About ICMA

ICMA advances professional local government worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing professional management of local government. ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, provides member support; publications, data, and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to more than 9,000 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world. The management decisions made by ICMA's members affect 185 million individuals living in thousands of communities, from small villages and towns to large metropolitan areas.

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Preface

This *Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator* was first published just over ten years ago. While a lot has changed in ten years, the basic process for selecting a chief administrator[1] has remained substantially the same. It still requires careful planning, astute evaluation of candidates, and a clear understanding of the relationship between the governing body[2] and the chief administrator. In this edition, however, new focus has been given to the ICMA Code of Ethics—the foundation of the local government management profession—and the emergence of the Voluntary Credentialed Manager program.

The Task Force on Recruitment Guidelines was formed in Fall 2010 and consisted of a very diverse group of ICMA members (many of whom have served on the ICMA Executive Board), Range Riders (former local government practitioners), younger members of the local government management profession, and representatives from executive search firms. From its only face-to-face meeting at the 2010 ICMA Conference in San José, this Task Force embraced the challenge of updating the guidelines. Over the next several months, we formed work groups to focus on three key elements of the process: recruitment, selection, and negotiation. After countless conference calls and emails, the new and improved *Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator* emerged.

The Task Force consisted of the following ICMA members:

Jane Bais-DiSessa
City Manager
Berkley, Michigan

Bill Baldridge
Executive Search Committee
Former City Manager
Michigan Municipal League

Troy Brown
Assistant City Manager
Livermore, California

Garry Brumback
Town Manager
Southington, Connecticut

Charlie Bush
City Administrator
Prosser, Washington

Mike Casey
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Management Partners, Inc.
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Tony Dahlerbruch
City Manager
Rolling Hills, California

Ed Daley
City Manager
Hopewell, Virginia

Tim Ernster
City Manager
Sedona, Arizona

Tom Fountaine
Borough Manager
State College, Pennsylvania

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1 Chief administrator refers to a manager, administrator, or executive of a local government.

2 Governing body refers to the elected officers of a town, village, borough, township, city, county, or a legally constituted council of governments.

Contents

1. Introduction

"Thousands of decisions are made every day in cities, towns, and counties that determine our quality of life.... Professional managers craft the plans and make the decisions that transform good communities into great ones.

—International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

Selecting a chief administrator is perhaps the most important decision that elected local officials will make for their community.

This guidebook was created by experienced, seasoned local government managers. It is designed to help elected officials, human resource professionals, local government staff, and professional executive search firms navigate the recruitment, selection, and negotiation processes to find the individual who is best suited to serve as the chief administrator. The chief administrator is like an orchestra conductor, directing and managing a team of professional, administrative, and field staff while interpreting and working toward the goals and objectives of the community's elected officials.

This guidebook offers best practices that will be most meaningful to you and your community in selecting a chief administrator. Because all communities, governing bodies, and chief administrators are not the same, this is not a "one size fits all" guidebook. Nevertheless, the local government managers who created this document are firmly committed to the ICMA Code of Ethics, which is a non-negotiable foundation for professional local government management, and strongly recommends that the hiring governing body use the Code of Ethics as a tool in its search for a professional local government manager. Herein, we explain recruitment choices and the selection processes to fit the unique size, culture, and dynamics of an individual community. Topics include provisions for interim management; the spectrum of resources available to assist in the recruiting process; applications, communications with applicants, and interviews; compensation; and transition. The appendices provide the ICMA Code of Ethics, ICMA Compensation Guidelines, a directory of professional organizations that are likely places advertise for a chief administrator, potential interview questions, the do's and don'ts of applicant relations, and the ICMA Model Employment Agreement. Using this guidebook can make recruiting and selecting a new chief administrator a positive, enjoyable, and unifying experience for you and your colleagues as elected officials.

As you use this resource, you will see highlighted in the margins important points for selecting the best individual for the position.

When faced with an upcoming or immediate vacancy in the chief administrator position, the governing body must quickly address the following questions:

- What should we do to ensure that the affairs of the local government are properly administered until a new chief administrator is selected and on board?
- How do we conduct a recruitment to fill the vacancy?

The following material provides tips and guidelines on the processes that the governing body needs to employ to successfully answer these questions. It identifies and discusses the key elements of managing the organization between the time that one chief administrator departs and another arrives, as well as the major decision points in conducting the recruitment, selection, and negotiation processes for appointing the new chief administrator.

Professional local government managers are committed to

- Serving as stewards of representative democracy
- Practicing the highest standards of honesty and integrity in local governance, as expressed through ICMA's Code of Ethics
- Building sustainable communities as a core responsibility
- Networking and exchanging knowledge and skills across international boundaries
- Lifelong learning and professional development
- Financial integrity and responsibility for management of the community
- Implementing best management practices.

2. Managing the Organization during Recruitment

The governing body must act thoughtfully and deliberately in determining how to ensure that the operations of the local government are properly managed during the period before a permanent chief administrator is selected and on the job. When faced with a vacancy in the chief administrator position, the governing body needs time to carefully consider the qualities, expertise, and experience it hopes to find in a new administrator and to use the agreed-upon criteria to develop the administrator profile. It then needs sufficient time to recruit and select the best possible successor who meets these criteria. While that is happening, however, it is important that the governing body identify a professional who will act as the chief administrator and properly manage local government operations while the recruitment process is underway.

Major Decision Point: Appointing an Interim Administrator

If the vacancy is the result of a planned retirement, the governing body may consider asking the current administrator to continue leading the organization for a short period of time on a contract basis. Alternatively, the governing body may elect to consult with the outgoing administrator regarding possible staff members who could fill this role.

In some cases, the members of the governing body may agree that they have confidence in a specific staff person. If there is an assistant administrator, for example, the governing body may appoint that person as interim administrator. If this assistant will be considered for the permanent position, the appointment as interim administrator will provide the elected officials with an opportunity to observe firsthand how the assistant handles the job. Another option is to appoint an assistant or department director (who will not be a candidate for the position); someone who is mature, seasoned, competent and respected by fellow employees.

Should the governing body determine that there is no one on staff who it can or wants to appoint as the interim administrator, it may decide to retain the services of a retired administrator or an administrator who is between jobs. State associations, munici-

pal leagues, or ICMA Range Riders are resources for identifying potential interim administrators.

The governing body should publicly announce the appointment of the interim chief administrator. Regardless of who is appointed, it should be made clear to all local government officials and staff that the interim chief administrator is responsible for implementing governing body policy and overseeing operations. It should also be made clear that if the interim administrator is ultimately selected to fill the position permanently, it will be because that person has proven to be the best among all the applicants.

Interim Management: The Governing Body's Role

Obviously, the local government must continue to operate during the interim between the departure of the current chief administrator and the appointment of the new one. The governing body and interim management team should do whatever is necessary to make sure that important projects and service delivery continue to move forward. It is important to reiterate that the governing body has the responsibility to make it clear to the staff and community that the interim administrator is in charge of the organization's operations.

The governing body should consider deferring new initiatives, when possible, until the new administrator is appointed and on the job. After all, to ensure effective administrative leadership in the future, it is desirable that the new administrator be involved in as many policy decisions as possible. Just filling a vacant department director position, for example, is an opportunity for the new administrator to begin building an administrative team. In fact, such an opportunity can be used to pique the interest of potential applicants during the recruitment process.

Although it is not desirable for the governing body to immerse itself in the administrative affairs of the local government, its members should be briefed about current organizational problems and the status of important projects before the current administrator leaves, if possible. In this way, the governing body may monitor progress on important matters, provide direction, and set priorities for the person selected as interim administrator.

3. Initiating the Recruitment

The governing body should initiate the recruitment process immediately after the official decision has been made regarding resignation, retirement, or termination. Failure to do so can potentially generate rumors within the community by various interested parties who may attempt to exert pressure on members to quickly fill the vacancy. The members of the governing body must bear in mind that an impulsive response to this pressure can be divisive for them and can damage their credibility. They must take charge of the recruitment: they must determine the process that will be used to recruit and select the best administrator, and make that decision clear to all concerned.

There may be a number of special circumstances that influence the approach and timing used to recruit a new chief administrator. The following examples provide some tips for addressing those circumstances:

- **Vacancy due to the chief administrator's termination or resignation under pressure.** If the position is vacant because the former administrator was terminated or forced to resign, neither the local government nor the former administrator will benefit from a public quarrel. It is far better for all concerned to mutually decide on a timetable for the administrator's departure. If this departure is handled professionally and in a mutually respectful manner, there

is less likelihood for controversy and ill will to arise around the issues of the separation. Further, and from a recruiting standpoint, handling a difficult situation well will enhance the local government's image and thus its ability to attract quality applicants.

- **Vacancy occurring prior to an election.** Occasionally, a governing body will delay initiating the recruitment process because an election is pending. But even in the face of an election, it should prepare for the process by developing the administrator profile (described in full later in this document) and determining how the recruitment will be conducted so as to reduce the time lapse between the departure of one administrator and arrival of another.

- **Vacancies due to newly adopted council-manager form of government.** If the position is vacant because voters either just approved the formation of or adopted a change to the council-manager form of government, the beginning of the search for a new chief administrator will depend on when the change becomes effective. Depending on the circumstances, it may be possible to have applications on file by the time the new members of the governing body are sworn in. In any case, the recruitment process should be initiated as soon as possible.

4. Conducting the Recruitment

There are several major elements and decision points in the recruitment process. This section of the handbook provides tips and guidelines for the governing body in determining the approach to use in this part of the process.

The governing body has three major choices for conducting the recruitment. It can:

- Conduct the recruitment in-house
- Retain an outside party to conduct the recruitment
- Use a hybrid approach and conduct the recruitment in conjunction with an outside party.

In-House Expertise Method: Recruitments Conducted by the Local Government

If the governing body chooses to conduct the recruitment in-house, it should be with the understanding that the task will be time-consuming and complex. The governing body may also have to decide whether to conduct the process as a body, delegate the responsibility to the chairperson, or assign the task to a committee of its members. If it elects to delegate the responsibility to one or more of its members, it must be sure to select people who are well respected and have the time to provide the necessary leadership and follow-through.

To provide support in the process, the governing body should seek the assistance of the local government's human resources officer and municipal attorney. In conducting the recruitment in-house, staff can work with the governing body to develop the administrator profile and design an effective and legal recruitment and selection process. Staff can also be responsible for the administrative tasks of placing advertisements, collecting résumés, and scheduling interviews. However, the governing body or its delegated members will approve the selection of the final candidates and conduct the interviews, and, of course, the body as a whole will make the final selection. In this scenario, staff serve as a resource throughout the entire recruitment process.

Outside Expertise Method: Recruitments Conducted with an Outside Party

The governing body can retain an outside party to conduct the recruitment. In some cases the interim or a retired administrator may be asked to coordinate the recruitment process. More often, however, the governing body will contract with a firm that specializes in providing executive search assistance.

When using an executive search firm, the governing body plays an active role in the process. It develops the administrator profile, approves the selection of the applicants, interviews the candidates, and, of course, makes the final selection. The benefit of using an executive search firm is the expertise that the firm brings to the process and its ability to coordinate the recruitment.

Typically the executive search firm begins by meeting with the elected officials either individually or as a group to help them develop the administrator profile. It is the firm's responsibility to facilitate these discussions and help the governing body reach a consensus. After this matter has been settled, the firm coordinates the overall process and assumes responsibility for all tasks until it is time for the elected body to select and interview candidates. During this process, the firm updates the governing body, keeping the members informed of its progress. As the firm will be responsible for all the administrative details, the role of the staff is usually limited to providing information about the local government and coordinating with the firm.

Governing bodies that use an outside service should ensure that a reputable firm, one familiar with the special requirements of local government management, is selected. The experience of the firm should be checked through contact with references—in particular, representatives of local governments that have used its services. Further, the governing body should be fully aware of the costs and benefits when deciding whether to use outside expertise.

Hybrid Method: In-House in Conjunction with Outside Party

In the third alternative, the governing body can conduct the recruitment in-house and supplement the process, where necessary, with assistance from an executive search firm or another outside source, such as an the ICMA Range Rider.

In some cases, the governing body may seek assistance at the beginning of the process to facilitate the discussion, develop the administrator profile, and determine the structure of the recruitment process. In other cases, local government officials may initiate the process in-house by developing the profile and advertising for the vacancy, and they may then use an outside source to help review résumés, conduct reference checks, and structure the interview process. This alternative may be most appropriate if cost is a concern; however, because it also presents opportunities for lapses in communication, the exact responsibilities of each party must be clarified in a written agreement.

5. Key Elements of the Recruitment Framework

Regardless of the method chosen for conducting the recruitment, the governing body must develop a framework for the recruitment process. It must agree at the outset on a number of key issues critical to the success of the recruitment, including criteria for the administrator profile, compensation range and components, and timing and geographic scope of the search.

Major Decision Point: Development of an Administrator Profile

The most significant decision point for the governing body in the recruitment of a new administrator is to define what the members are looking for—that is, to create the administrator profile. The profile will encompass those qualities, characteristics, experience, and areas of expertise that would be found in an ideal candidate. Only by considering how applicants compare and measure against one another and, of course, against the established criteria, can the governing body be sure that the candidate it appoints has the appropriate combination of work experience, management experience, and leadership style to be successful in the position.

The governing body should begin with a survey of its needs and those of the organization. To determine the needs of the organization, the governing body should invite input from the department directors. Items to be considered include size of the local government, composition of the community, services provided, and overall objectives and priorities of the governing body. The work experience, skills, and expertise of the candidates must relate to these factors. The governing body should also consider both the "nuts-and-bolts" skills and abilities, such as budgeting, human resources, and technological know-how, and the "soft" skills, such as the ability to work with people and to lead an organization. These criteria will form the basis for reviewing résumés, selecting finalists, and making a hiring decision.

Unless the governing body can come to consensus on these criteria, it may be difficult to find the right candidate. By reaching consensus, however, the governing body will be better able to inform the applicants on what it is looking for in a chief administrator.

Developing the administrator profile helps the governing body define its needs and establishes the groundwork for generating a rich pool of applicants with the skills and abilities to address the needs of the governing body, the community, and the organization.

Decision Point: Community Engagement in Administrator Profile

The governing body must decide whether to engage community members or committees in the recruitment process. In most cases, the local government assumes responsibility for the recruitment and conducts the process without involving members of the community.

In some cases, however, a governing body may seek input from community members or committees when developing the administrator profile. This not only allows the community to be part of the process but also may provide the governing body with a better understanding of the role of the administrator. Depending on the method that the governing body uses to conduct the recruitment, gathering input from the community would be facilitated by staff, the outside recruiter, or the elected officials.

Although community input will be valuable, the governing body will ultimately determine the qualities and experiences to be incorporated into the administrator profile, and this should be clearly communicated to the community. It is, after all, to the governing body that the new administrator will be directly reporting.

Governing bodies need to be very alert to the dangers of either hiring a clone of the outgoing administrator, assuming that person is leaving on good terms, or a polar opposite, assuming that person is leaving on less than good terms. The importance of evaluating the current needs of the governing body and locality cannot be overstated.

Major Decision Point: Administrator Compensation

Another critical element to be considered at the outset of the recruitment process is administrator compensation. It is important for the local government to have some general understanding of the acceptable salary range, but it is also important to have some flexibility. Some local governments identify a range; others provide the salary of the current administrator as an indicator; and still others may leave the salary open, to be commensurate with the new hire's background and experience. The governing body will also determine other components of the administrator's compensation, such as deferred compensation, vacation accrual, and professional development allowances.

It is important for the governing body to make clear that it wants the best administrator it can find. In general, potential applicants for the position will want to have some indication of the salary range and compensation package. But that will be only one of many factors that they will use in deciding whether to apply.

ICMA has developed compensation guidelines for negotiating salary and benefits for local government positions. These guidelines are provided in Appendix B and are also available online at www.icma.org/compensationguidelines. The actual compensation package will be negotiated with the final candidate at the conclusion of the recruitment process.

Schedule

Since top candidates often view applying for a new job as a major career decision, it is important that they have adequate time to consider the opportunity, discuss it with their families, and prepare an appropriate résumé. Similarly, the governing body, staff, or executive recruitment firm needs sufficient time to review résumés and conduct reference checks to ensure that good candidates are not overlooked and that finalists meet the desired qualifications. It cannot be overemphasized that the recruitment should move forward expeditiously while also allowing adequate time for a thorough and comprehensive search.

The timing of the recruitment can sometimes be affected by publication deadlines, which are important in terms of properly advertising the vacant position. An ideal timetable would provide **at least sixty days** from the start of the recruitment to the deadline for submitting résumés; **thirty days** to review résumés, conduct background checks, interview candidates, and make a final selection; and **at least thirty days** for the new administrator to relocate. To maximize flexibility in the process, the governing body may advertise the position with an "open until filled" statement.

Profile: Impact of Special Circumstances:

As the governing body decides on the criteria for the administrator profile, three types of situations should receive special consideration:

1. A local government that has just changed its form of government will ordinarily need an administrator who can inspire local government officials with the enthusiasm needed to implement the new structure. A first administrator in a new structure should be adept at public relations and at establishing relationships with incumbent officials and employees.

2. When an administrator has been dismissed or has resigned under pressure, the governing body tends to look for strengths in areas in which the outgoing administrator showed weaknesses. There are dangers, however, in overcompensating for qualities that have led to dissatisfaction. If the outgoing administrator gave too much freedom to subordinates, for example, suddenly changing to a strong disciplinarian might result in antagonisms that would only lead to further problems. Sometimes a new administrator will be confronted with major problems that must be addressed immediately. If such a situation is anticipated, the governing body should make these circumstances known to any applicant who is being seriously considered.

3. When a popular administrator retires or moves to another local government, the governing body may ask for this person's assistance in the search for a successor. However, the governing body should not overlook the possible need for new strengths or different qualities.

Geographic Scope

Another factor to consider in determining the recruitment framework is the geographic scope: should the search be nationwide, statewide, or regional? A broad geographic search may attract more applicants who have demonstrated an ability to manage in a complex urban environment. On the other hand, a focus on the local government's state or region may provide applicants who have a better understanding of and orientation to local problems, legal issues, financing alternatives, and similar matters. In any event, the new administrator will provide a fresh perspective on the issues and challenges facing the community and the organization.

From the applicant's perspective, it is assumed that the local government is looking for the best candidate and that all résumés, regardless of where the applicant currently works, will be reviewed carefully. The determination of the scope of the recruitment will influence the advertising and outreach strategies used.

Advertising and Outreach Strategies

In order to generate a sufficient and diverse pool of qualified applicants, the governing body should develop advertising and outreach strategies.

Advertising Campaign   It is to the advantage of the local government to ensure that every professional who might have an interest in the vacant position is aware of the opportunity to apply for it. Therefore, it is important that the advertising campaign be comprehensive and include a carefully worded advertisement. This does not mean, however, that the campaign has to be extensive or expensive. Most local governments, for example, avoid advertising for an administrator in general circulation newspapers unless there is a local requirement to the contrary; this is an expensive form of advertising that does not reach the targeted audience.

More effective vehicles for advertising for chief administrators can be found with organizations that are directly related to local government. In addition to ICMA, the following sources should be considered:

- National League of Cities
- National Association of Counties
- National Association of County Administrators
- National Forum for Black Public Administrators
- International Hispanic Network
- American Society for Public Administration.

Resources at the state level include state municipal leagues, county associations, and municipal assistants organizations. Many of these organizations publish newsletters or magazines and have a online presence; the subscribers to these resources are the men and women in the public administration and local government management professions. Addresses and websites for these resources are listed in Appendix C.

Local governments have some flexibility when preparing and placing advertisements, but at a minimum, the advertisement should include the following:

- Title of the vacant position
- Name of the local government
- Population of the local government
- Amounts of the operating and capital budgets
- Number of full-time employees
- Services provided
- Statement regarding the compensation package
- Filing deadline, including any special items of information desired such as current salary and work-related references
- A brief description of key areas of interest and desirable experience and qualifications (or a reference or email link to the administrator profile)
- Indication of whether residency is required
- A timetable indicating the principal steps and timeframe for the overall recruitment
- Where and to whom to send résumés with a notation as to whether email submittals are acceptable or required
- Website of the local government.

It should be noted that some publications permit the use of display ads that incorporate the local government logo and/or graphics within an innovative format.

In addition to the advertisement, the governing body, through the staff or the executive recruiter, will usually develop a printed brochure that describes the community, the organization, and the position, as well as providing the administrator profile and the governing body's key goals and objectives.

Outreach Strategy   While advertising can generate outstanding applicants and the local government should look closely at all received résumés, the governing body should supplement the advertising campaign by identifying an outreach strategy to ensure that the search extends to the widest possible pool of

qualified applicants. The outreach strategy may have a number of approaches for attracting external candidates, encouraging superior internal candidates to apply, and promoting diversity in the applicant pool.

For External Applicants   Useful sources of information about potential external candidates include the current administrator, former and retired administrators, members of the local government, local government officials in adjacent communities, executive directors of state leagues, directors of university public administration programs, leaders of regional municipal assistants, and ICMA Range Riders.

When determining an outreach strategy, the governing body, in conjunction with staff or the recruiter, could consider sending letters to identified individuals advising them of the opening and inviting them to send a résumé if they are interested in the position. The correspondence should include a basic package of information describing the local government and the vacant position. For the purposes of confidentiality, all correspondence should either be sent to the applicant's private residence or marked "Personal and Confidential" if sent to the workplace.

Shortly after the letter has been mailed, a follow-up telephone call should be made to confirm that the correspondence was received, assure the recipient that it was not a form letter, indicate why the position may be a good career opportunity, and answer questions. The same deadline for submitting résumés should be used in both the advertisements and the supplemental letters of invitation.

For Internal Applicants   The local government should be sure to inform its employees of the vacancy and of how and when to apply. The governing body itself may directly invite one or more employees, such as the assistant city administrator or a department director, to submit a résumé, or it may do so indirectly through staff or the executive recruiter. Whether in-house applicants are solicited or apply on their own, it is important that they be treated in the same manner as other applicants.

It should be made clear that if an in-house applicant is ultimately selected, it is because the governing body has determined that the candidate was the best choice of all those who applied. While most applicants will receive written notification of their status, the governing body may decide to talk personally with any in-house applicant who was not selected in order to provide good communication with staff, maintain morale, and help ensure an orderly and positive transition.

For Diversity of Applicants   Development of a strategy to generate a diverse applicant pool helps to ensure a broad cross-section of candidates. A rich pool with applicants of both sexes and from different races and ethnic backgrounds is beneficial because the chosen candidate will likely bring a different perspective to the organization. Having diversity within a local government can enhance the organization's overall responsiveness to an increasingly more diverse spectrum of residents, improve its relations with surrounding communities, increase its ability to manage change, and expand its creativity.

In addition, the governing body may develop an outreach strategy to encourage the participation of applicants from diverse professional backgrounds. Organizations large and small use executive members of their staff on various levels, and there is often a significant wealth of knowledge to be found among candidates who have had successful careers as assistant city administrators, as department heads, and in other management positions.

6. Key Elements of the Application Process

The application process is the point where effective screening of candidates begins. For this part of the recruitment to be successful, the governing body must proceed carefully and with considerable thought. This section addresses issues such as whether to use a standardized application form; how to provide potential applicants with key information about the position and the local government; and the importance of establishing and maintaining good relations with applicants. High-quality applicants are more likely to pursue the vacancy if the local government can portray itself as a well-run, organized, and efficient organization.

The Application Form

Most local governments prefer to ask applicants to submit a résumé in whatever format the applicant determines will be most effective, rather than a standardized application form. For the applicant, this approach provides flexibility to present past work experience in a way that relates directly to the position in question. At the same time, it permits the local government to see how the applicant organizes and presents material in a written format. The manner in which materials are prepared can be an indication of real interest in the position.

A standardized application form is not recommended in recruitments for the governing body's top administrative professional. If one is used, however, it should be easy to complete, and the information requested should be relevant to the vacant position. Regardless of the form of application, the applicant should be required to submit a cover letter and résumé.

The Local Government Information Packet

Serious applicants will not submit a résumé for consideration until they have done their homework and have satisfied themselves that the position represents a good career opportunity. Often they will seek information from local government officials about the community, the organization, and the position.

This is one of the first contacts that will form an impression of the local government on the potential applicant. If the impression created is that the recruitment is well organized, that the local government officials know what they are looking for and are consistent in the message, and that sufficient information about the locality is easily obtained, potential applicants are more likely to form a positive image of the position and the governing body in deciding whether to apply.

To help disseminate the same information to all applicants, the governing body could put together a packet of information that includes:

1. A copy of the outreach brochure or other documents that provide the criteria for the position, indicating key objectives and priorities and the administrator profile
2. Ordinance or charter requirements if they contain significant or unusual provisions regarding the position
3. Summary information about the local government, including organizational structure, personnel practices, number of employees, services provided, and budget data
4. Information about the community in the form of a chamber of commerce brochure or similar publication, if such is attractively prepared and available
5. Websites that contain information on the local government and community
6. The name, phone number, and e-mail address of a contact person.

Applicant Relations

Appendix E in this handbook provides some basic do's and don'ts regarding applicant relations and the recruitment process. The two key areas that are important to stress are candidate status notification and confidentiality.

> Two critical elements of applicant relations are important to stress: keeping the candidates informed of the status of the process and maintaining confidentiality.

There is no faster way to damage the image of the local government and to lose good applicants than to violate the trust or assurance that was given regarding confidentiality.

Candidate Status Notification   As a rule, it is important to engage in the simple and courteous steps of acknowledging résumés as they are received and of notifying applicants of their status as the recruitment proceeds. Prompt acknowledgment of résumés is one indication that the process is being handled in a businesslike manner, and it can add to the applicant's positive impression of the organization. This acknowledgment also should inform the applicant of the recruitment timetable. Unless there are unusual or unanticipated delays, this response should be sufficient until applicants are actually notified as to their final status. To maintain confidentiality, all correspondence should be directed to the applicant's home, not business address.

Additionally, if special circumstances arise (such as a recall election) that might cause a delay in either the recruitment or the selection process, it is important to communicate any changes in the established schedule to all applicants.

Similarly, notifying all applicants as to their status, even if they are not selected as finalists, is a basic courtesy that will affect how the candidate views the local government.

Maintaining Confidentiality   Confidentiality is an important consideration in any recruitment. Present job security and long-term career opportunities could be jeopardized if an applicant's interest in another position is made public prematurely. While applicants realize that the local government will want to contact their current employers to conduct background checks and assess their job performance, they typically prefer to wait until it is clear that they are going to be considered as finalists who will be invited to the second interviews for the position.

The governing body should determine, at the outset, the extent to which the recruitment process will be confidential. The governing body, in consultation with the local government's attorney, should decide the level of confidentiality due to the varying open record and disclosure statutes between the states. If applicants' names are likely to be disclosed at any point, potential applicants should be advised so that they may take it into account in deciding whether to pursue the vacancy.

From a recruiting standpoint, assurance of confidentiality will result in more applications being submitted, particularly from those who are currently employed elsewhere. As confidentiality is important to both parties, such assurances should be honored, and applicants should be given adequate time to notify their current employers before those employers are contacted by the recruiting local government.

7. The Role of the Media in the Recruitment Process

Members of the media will obviously have an interest in the recruitment process and their involvement will be dictated in part by state law and in part by tradition. At the outset, local government officials should brief the media on the timing and steps involved in the overall process. After the deadline has passed for submitting résumés, the governing body may decide to brief the media and the community on the overall response.

As the confidentiality of résumés is a major concern in any recruitment and can significantly affect the number and quality of résumés received, applicants should be apprised of any applicable state laws in this area, and the governing body, with advice from the local government's attorney, should determine what information will and will not be made available to the media.

8. The Selection Process

Once the deadline for submitting résumés has passed and all applications have been received, the selection process begins. Principal steps are as follows:

- Reviewing the applications
- Determining which candidates will be interviewed
- Interviewing the candidates
- Making the final selection.

Reviewing the Applications

The selection process begins with a review of the applications and résumés that have been submitted. Depending on how the governing body has chosen to conduct the recruitment, the participants involved in this initial review may be the body as a whole, the chief elected officer, a subcommittee of the governing body, the staff, or the executive recruitment firm. Alternatively, some local governments have used a panel of chief administrators from other local governments to serve as a screening panel. Regardless of who performs the screening, the objective of the initial review is to identify those candidates who best reflect the qualities, characteristics, experience, and areas of expertise that were defined in the administrator profile.

Major Decision Point: Determining the Candidates to Be Interviewed

The determination of the candidates to be interviewed is a significant decision point in the selection process. The objective here is to narrow the total group of applicants to a smaller group that will continue to the next step.

Initial Background Check After the group of applicants has been narrowed down to those who meet the qualifications described in the administrator profile, the list may be further refined by confirming educational credentials and conducting online checks. Such reviews should not violate the confidentiality of the applicant pool. For online checks, it is important to consider the source and avoid drawing hasty conclusions from these sources.

Selection of Candidates After the review of the résumés and the initial background check, the participants in this process should meet with the governing body as a whole to recommend which applicants should be invited to an interview. The chosen group of candidates should be large enough to expose the governing body to an array of personalities. In most cases, **five to ten candidates** should be selected. The governing body may also establish a secondary list of candidates who could be invited to the interview if one or more of the first group of candidates decline or are unable to continue with the process.

Informing the Candidates Once candidates have been selected, the governing body representative, the staff, or the executive recruiter should contact the each candidate by phone and do the following:

1. Inform the candidate that he or she has been selected to be interviewed and offer congratulations (the candidate should be made to feel that the governing body is pleased to have reviewed his or her résumé). At the same time, confirm the candidate's continuing interest in the position.

2. Advise the candidate of: the nature of the interview process, including date and time, number of other candidates, whether there are any in-house candidates, and when a decision is expected to be made. Indicate that all the details and information will be confirmed in a written correspondence. If email is to be used for this correspondence, confirm the candidate's email address.

3. As described in the section on applicant relations, the governing body should have already determined the extent to which the recruitment process will be confidential. At this point, the candidate should be advised if the names of candidates are to be made public and be given the opportunity to withdraw.

4. Confirm that the candidate has received the information package provided during the application process. Indicate that a supplemental package with more detailed information will be provided directly to the candidate's home in advance of the interview. The supplemental package may include:

- A list of governing body members and their occupations
- Copies of meeting minutes from the past several months
- The general or comprehensive plan and land use maps
- The most recent budget
- A recent bond prospectus
- Any other material that would be of particular relevance, given the goals and objectives of the local government and the criteria for the position.

As an alternative to a paper package of information, the candidates can be directed to the locality's website for such information.

5. Confirm local government policy on reimbursement of expenses incurred in conjunction with the interview. Many local governments reimburse candidates for all out-of-pocket expenses, including reasonable transportation, room, and board. ("Reasonable" is intended to eliminate first-class airline tickets, four-star hotels, and gourmet restaurants.)

Such reimbursement of expenses is another way that the local government can demonstrate its interest in the candidate. It reinforces the positive nature of the recruitment process and is sometimes a factor in whether the candidate is able to attend. Should there be strong reluctance on the part of the governing body to reimburse all expenses, the local government can share expenses with the candidate or can agree to reimburse all expenses incurred after the first trip.

The local government staff can offer to handle all reservations, transportation, and related matters, but this can be cumbersome and time-consuming. In most cases, the local government confirms the time and place and lets the candidate make his or her own arrangements. The candidates usually prefer this approach as well.

Interviewing the Candidates

Most local governments use the interview approach for selecting the chief administrator. In this approach, the governing body will meet as a whole with each individual candidate. As the initial interview is usually limited to an hour, a second interview with one or more of the finalists is generally incorporated into the process.

Initial Interview   The following provides important guidelines for conducting the initial interview.

Structure of the Interview   The interview process should be well organized in a comfortable setting for both parties that invites open and relaxed discussions. This element of the process is generally not considered a public meeting, although the governing body, staff, or executive recruiter should consult with the city's legal advisor to ensure that all requisite notices are sent and other legal requirements are met.

All members of the governing body should participate in the interview with one member, usually the chair, designated as the discussion leader. This interview should last at least an hour as it is difficult to pursue a range of questions in less time. Further, all candidates anticipate and deserve an opportunity to present their qualifications to the governing body and describe their interest in the position. It is important to realize that the interview process not only provides the governing body with an opportunity to improve its knowledge of the candidate but also influences the candidate's interest in the position.

As part of the initial interview, the governing body may want to include a comprehensive tour of the community. A trusted senior staff person would be a likely tour guide.

Content of the Interview Questions   During the first interview, the governing body will question the candidate about a variety of matters, such as overall work experience, specific accomplishments, career objectives, alternative approaches to practical problems faced by the local government, and similar matters. A list of potential questions is provided in Appendix D.

The interview also gives the candidate an opportunity to evaluate the governing body as a group and to ask questions. An important issue to discuss during the interview is the governing body's working relationship with the administrator, clarifying all roles and responsibilities.

During the formal and any informal meetings between the governing body and the candidates, discussions and questions should focus on the criteria for the position that were established at the outset of the recruiting process. Obviously, discussions should stay within acceptable legal parameters and should not include references to politics, religion, age, racial origin, and sexual preferences.

When the initial interview process is over, the governing body should avoid impulsive action but rather take whatever time is necessary to arrive at a comfortable and well-reasoned decision. At this point, either one person has emerged as the clear choice of the

governing body; or, more likely, the pool of candidates has been narrowed down to two or three individuals that the governing body would like to further pursue. In most cases, the process will involve a second interview of this smaller group of finalists. However, if there is one clear choice, please refer to the section entitled "Making the Final Selection."

Second Interview   If, after the initial interview, there are two or three candidates that the governing body would like to further consider, a couple of options exist for setting up a second interview:

1. The governing body may invite the finalists back for a second, more in-depth interview, coupled perhaps with some sort of community function. This arrangement often provides the governing body with the insight needed to make a final decision.

2. The governing body may invite the finalists back for a second, more in-depth interview, coupled with an opportunity for community leaders and/or staff to provide input into the selection of the chief administrator.

In either case, finalists should be notified of their status, congratulated for being among the select few who will be further considered, informed of the process, and asked for permission for the governing body to conduct reference checks.

Reference Checks   As the governing body is now deciding between two or three qualified candidates, it is important at this point to conduct reference checks that provide additional information on which to base the decision. References should be checked to learn about each finalist's ability to work effectively with people, to develop a more complete understanding of the finalist's work experience and specific accomplishments, and to see if the finalist's qualifications match the profile for the position. The following suggestions are important for ensuring consistency and thoroughness when conducting reference checks:

■ The reference checks may be performed by members of the governing body, staff, or executive recruitment firm. In general, however, it is advisable to limit the number of people performing the checks to one or two. It may be difficult, depending on the number of candidates, to have one person perform all the reference checks, especially if there are three references for each candidate. Further, it can be helpful if two people compare notes on the same candidates.

■ Be consistent in discussing issues with and asking questions of each candidate in order to provide a good basis for comparison.

■ Contact enough people to ensure a consistent reading as to the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. If a reference can say only good things about the candidate, he or she should be asked directly what weaknesses the candidate has.

Decision Point: Inviting the Candidate's Spouse/ Partner   While the focus of the recruitment is on the chief administrator, the governing body may formally invite the candidate's spouse/partner to the community during the interview process. Generally, this type of invitation occurs only after the first interview process has narrowed the group of candidates down to the top two or three. The spouse/partner should never be included in the formal interview process, nor made to feel as if he or she is being interrogated in any way.

If the governing body formally invites the spouse/ partner to accompany the candidate, it is important that this part of the process be as well organized as all the other parts that concern the candidate directly. Here, too, an important impression about the community is being made. The interests of the spouse/partner should be carefully determined and accommodated.

On the other hand, the governing body may use an informal, non-structured approach to the involvement of the spouse/partner. Understanding that a candidate may bring his or her spouse/partner along to explore the community as a possible future home, the governing body may consider having a packet of relevant community information available.

Decision Point: Community Involvement   The governing body must decide whether to involve community members or committees in the interview process. In most cases, the local government assumes responsibility for the interviews and conducts the process of selecting the new chief administrator without the involvement of members of the community.

In some cases, however, governing bodies have chosen to supplement the usual discussion between members and finalists by inviting community leaders to participate. For example, finalists may meet with selected community leaders to answer questions and receive their input on matters they consider important to the local government. If this option is taken, the purpose of the meeting should be made clear to all involved. Both the finalist and the community members should know whether these meetings are intended simply to provide the

finalist with additional information on the local government or whether the community group will also be involved in the actual selection process. In the latter case, although the input from the community will be valuable, it should be made clear that the governing body will make the final selection based upon a variety of factors.

Decision Point: Staff Involvement   The governing body must also decide whether to involve staff members in the interview process. It may choose to supplement the usual discussion between members and finalists by inviting staff members to participate. For example, finalists may meet with selected department directors to answer questions and review departmental operations in more detail.

If this option is taken, its purpose should be made clear to all involved. Both the finalist and the staff members should know whether these meetings are intended simply to provide the finalist with additional information on the local government or whether the group will also be involved in the selection process. In the latter case, although the input from the staff will be valuable, it should be made clear that the governing body will make the final selection based upon a variety of factors.

Major Decision Point: Making the Final Selection

After the second interviews, there should be one person who is the clear first choice of the majority, if not all, of the governing body. It is important to both the governing body and the potential new hire that the decision be unanimous, if possible. A unanimous vote from the governing body demonstrates a commitment of support to the new chief administrator and sends a positive message to both the organization and the community. If the governing body is divided on the appointment and the decision is not unanimous, however, the chosen finalist should be advised of this prior to accepting the position.

Once the selection has been made, the governing body, staff, or executive recruiter should contact the

> It is important that the vote for the new chief administrator be unanimous, if possible. This sends a positive message to the organization and the community.

finalist, confirm his or her willingness to accept the position, and obtain permission to conduct a very thorough background check, which will be performed by an outside party. This process includes interviews with individuals in the candidate's current community, an investigation into possible criminal history, and a credit check, which requires the candidate's consent.

Another element of this final selection process may include some or all of the members of the governing body making an on-site visit to the finalist's current community. Often finalists insist that an agreement regarding terms and conditions of employment be agreed upon before being open to a site visit.

Once the governing body is satisfied with the results of that process, it may inform the finalist and move ahead to put together a total compensation package and discuss other related arrangements. However, if the governing body is unable to satisfactorily conclude negotiations with its first choice, it may need to engage in discussions with one of the other finalists. Thus, it should refrain from notifying the other finalists until all arrangements have been finalized with the first-choice candidate.

From a public image standpoint, it is imperative that all candidates learn about the final selection from the governing body or its representative, as opposed to hearing about it from a third party or reading about it online or in a newsletter or professional publication. A representative from the governing body, staff, or executive recruitment firm should personally contact the runners-up prior to or at the same time that a news release about the appointment is issued.

9. The Negotiation Process

Once the local government has made its decision and the finalist has indicated a willingness to serve as the chief administrator, a number of final arrangements must be completed. These include negotiating a compensation package and completing transition activities. Only after these arrangements are concluded can the new chief administrator relocate and begin work for the community.

Preparation for Negotiation

The governing body needs to ensure that relations with the new administrator get off to a good start. At this point, nothing should happen that causes the new administrator to reconsider.

It is important that the governing body identify a single individual to act as the negotiator for the local government. Depending on the approach that the governing body has selected, the negotiator may be a member of the governing body; a member of the staff, such as the interim chief administrator or the municipal attorney; or the executive recruiter. The following are important guidelines regarding the structure of the negotiations:

1. The atmosphere should be friendly and relaxed.
2. The negotiator should be flexible. Negotiating implies a willingness to consider options and alternatives in pursuit of an acceptable package. There may well be more than one way to meet the financial objectives of the new administrator.
3. The governing body should be realistic. No matter how beautiful and desirable the community or position may be, the finalist is unlikely to accept the new position without an increase in pay over his or her present salary.

Major Decision Point: Negotiating Compensation

In compensation negotiations, base salary is a good place to start. The ICMA Compensation Guidelines, which are provided in Appendix B, are a good source of information to help with this part of the process. The person conducting the negotiation on behalf of the local government should keep the following questions in mind:

The governing body should rely on a single individual to handle its part of the negotiation process. The process should be friendly and relaxed; the negotiator should be flexible; and the governing body should be realistic in its guidelines to the negotiator.

1. Ultimately, what salary will be acceptable to the governing body?
2. What is the bargaining range?
3. What is the current salary of the applicant?
4. What type of salary and total compensation package did the candidate discuss during the interview?

ICMA, the National Association of Counties, and state leagues of cities and counties are sources of information on the salaries of local government administrators around the country. Prior to initiating negotiations, the governing body should compare its salary range with that of other governing bodies in same region of the country.

Elements of Total Compensation Elements of a total compensation package typically include:

- Base salary
- Deferred compensation
- Severance pay
- Use of government car or car allowance
- Use of technology or technology allowance
- Retirement plan
- Medical and other insurance (dental, optical, life, disability)
- Vacation accrual
- Holidays
- Sick leave accrual
- Membership dues, conference, and professional development attendance fees.

Before the negotiation begins, the governing body should ask the candidate to provide a written itemization of his or her current total compensation. After receiving this information, the person negotiating on behalf of the governing body should outline a proposed package and provide it to the candidate. Usually there will be no negotiation on those benefits that are similar among local governments, such as medical insurance and holidays. The variables most often relate to base salary and particular financial objectives, such as deferred compensation, health insurance, and requirements to join a state retirement system.

The proposed compensation package should (1) leave the individual whole on basic benefits, (2) provide an appropriate step forward in cash-related benefits, (3) ensure an increase in take-home pay, and (4) deal with any particular financial objectives that the new administrator may have.

Noncompensation Elements   During the negotiations, some issues will arise that do not relate to the total compensation package but may well have significant financial implications for both the local government and the new administrator. Both parties need to be flexible and realistic in dealing with these issues:

- **Relocation expenses:** It is common for local governments to pay the one-time cost of relocating the administrator and his or her family and household furnishings to the new local government. Sometimes both parties agree on a "not-to-exceed" figure based on estimates from moving companies.

- **Temporary housing:** An allowance for temporary housing is usually provided until the new administrator is able to sell his or her former home and/or relocate his or her family. Typically, this amount is sufficient to cover the cost of a modern furnished apartment or condominium. Again, both parties may agree to a fixed time period or amount.

- **Commuting expenses:** As with temporary housing, the local government often will agree to reimburse the administrator for periodic family visits or for the spouse/partner to visit for house-hunting purposes.

- **Housing assistance:** Regional variations in the cost of housing or housing financing can complicate the negotiations. There is considerable precedent for local governments—using appropriate safeguards and limits—to assist in the purchase and/or financing of housing for the new administrator. A variety of options exist, including a loan or a salary supplement.

Employment Agreements   It is in the interests of both the community and the chief administrator to have a written summary of the terms and conditions of employment to which both parties have agreed. The stable working situation created by such an agreement helps to attract and keep top-flight administrators in a generally mobile profession. ICMA recommends the use of employment agreements because the detailing of salary, benefits, and other conditions of the administrator's job puts those items where they belong—in a contract where both parties can know what is expected—and removes them from the daily agenda of the chief administrator and members of the governing body.

While such an agreement usually does not refer to a specific term of employment and permits either the governing body or the chief administrator to terminate for cause or at will, it should include a section providing the administrator with severance pay for a fixed period of time if he or she is terminated. This provides important personal and professional security for local government chief administrators, as they have the rather unique situation of working at the pleasure of the governing body with the possibility of dismissal for any reason at any time.

While not a lengthy legal document, the employment agreement is usually drafted by the local government's attorney. The new administrator is often given an opportunity to prepare a first draft for consideration. If an employment agreement is not used, a formal letter of understanding, at a minimum, should be prepared.

As a final note on this process, the governing body should be prepared for the possibility that it will be unable to reach agreement on compensation or other matters with the first-choice candidate. In these instances, the governing body typically enters into negotiations with its second-choice candidate. As indicated previously, once an agreement has been finalized, all other candidates should be promptly notified that they were not selected.

10. The Transition Process

After the governing body and new chief administrator have reached agreement on the issues of compensation, starting date, and method and timing of announcing the selection to both the community and the administrator's former local government, the transition process begins.

Announcing the Selection

The announcement of the selection should be well planned and coordinated between the governing body and new chief administrator. Two factors should precede any formal announcement of the appointment:

- The successful candidate has formally accepted the position and the negotiations have been concluded; and

- The successful candidate has been given the opportunity to notify his or her current governing body about the appointment.

This public announcement should be coordinated carefully to recognize the instantaneous nature of electronic communication.

Additional Elements

Additional elements that the governing body may employ to ensure a smooth transition for the new chief administrator are as follows:

- **General assistance:** For a smooth transition, the local government should offer whatever general assistance the new administrator might need in moving, such as introductions to realtors and bankers and support to the spouse/partner in finding suitable employment.

- **Orientation meetings:** The governing body should arrange to introduce the new chief administrator to department heads and local government staff. While the new administrator may have met some of these individuals during the interview process, a special meeting or reception can be a pleasant way to turn over responsibility. Similar meetings, briefing sessions, and/or receptions can be arranged to introduce the new administrator and his or her family to community groups, civic leaders, and residents in general.

- **Local government work session, orientation, and review of objectives:** It is desirable to have an initial work session with the new administrator to discuss and clarify initial expectations on both sides and to review goals and objectives. Even though some of these issues may have been raised during the interview process, communication from the outset can help ensure a smooth working relationship.

- **Performance evaluation:** Using the position's goals and objectives as a starting point, the governing body and new chief administrator should agree to an annual or semiannual review of the administrator's performance. This established and formal process helps to ensure that communication between the parties is maintained, that progress is monitored, and that goals and objectives are reviewed and refined on a regular basis.

11. Conclusion

Choosing a chief administrator can be the most significant action of the governing body. The chief administrator is a leader, coach, and chief of strategy for the staff team whose job it is to implement a vision, policy, and procedures; accomplish goals; and achieve the desired output of the organization. Similar to a chief executive officer of a Fortune 500 company, the chief administrator is also responsible for serving an elected governing body, managing the financial aspects of the organization, directing the employees, ensuring quality customer service, and implementing legal and ethical standards. Furthermore, unique to public agencies, the chief administrator oversees an organization that is focused on providing a variety of services to the community rather than on making a profit.

In addition to a very diversified portfolio of services that must be provided and interests that must be served fairly, the chief administrator is responsible for an organization that must balance its budget; provide for and encourage public input into decision making; and understand, respect, and appreciate the political environment. In summary, the position of chief administrator requires a variety of skill sets—not every person is capable of performing the role. Therefore, selecting the right person for the job is critical for the governing body and for the community.

This guidebook addresses a number of factors to consider in recruiting, selecting, negotiating, and hiring a professional local government manager. In doing so, it elaborates on the "best practices" for identifying the appropriate skills and background of a chief administrator, noting that the governing body must identify the qualities, characteristics, experience, and areas of expertise that would be found in the ideal candidate. Throughout the entire process, clear communication to staff, the community, and the media is essential for achieving the governing body's goals. In the end, the process of recruiting and selecting a chief administrator should be a positive and unifying experience, resulting in the appointment of an individual who represents and embodies the governing body's vision for the future.

ICMA and its members are resources available for providing guidance and recommendations in the recruitment of a chief administrator. With this document, we hope we have provided a basic understanding of the process involved in selecting a professional local government manager who meets the needs of the community.

Hiring a Professional Manager

ICMA Guidelines for Compensation

ICMA

Guidelines
for Compensation

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

ICMA
Guidelines for Compensation

Maintaining public trust and integrity in local government requires both effective governance and management of the organization. The following guidelines are intended to establish a best practice for establishing and negotiating compensation for local government executives and staff and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the governing body, local government manager, and employee.

The Principles
Compensation and personnel matters should be guided by the core principles of the ICMA Code of Ethics. ICMA affirms that the standard practice for establishing the compensation of local government managers be fair, reasonable, transparent, and based on comparable public salaries nationally and regionally. ICMA members should act with integrity in all personal and professional matters in order to merit the trust of elected officials, the public and employees. Local government managers have an ethical responsibility to be clear about what is being requested and to avoid excessive compensation.

Elected officials perform a critical governance role providing oversight of the management of the organization. To that end, they must be engaged in establishing the process for determining and compensation for all executives appointed by the governing body.

Compensation should be based on the position requirements, the complexity of the job reflected in the composition of the organization and community, the leadership needed, labor market conditions, cost of living in the community, and the organization's ability to pay.

The Process for Negotiating Executive Compensation
To establish fair and reasonable compensation, the governing body should either operate as a committee of the whole or designate an evaluation and compensation subcommittee, to design and implement the methodology for setting the compensation of the local government manager and any other appointees of the governing body.

Compensation benchmarks should be established based on comparable local government and/or public sector agencies.

The governing body should engage experts whether contracted or in house as necessary to provide the information required to establish fair and reasonable compensation levels.

All decisions on compensation and benefits must be made by the entire governing body in a public meeting.

Compensation Guidelines for Local Government Executives
A starting point for the elected officials and local government manager in any salary negotiation should be to:
1. Determine the requirements of the job and the experience needed to successfully perform the job duties.

2. Examine market conditions to learn what comparable public sector executives earn. A best practice would be to gather information using pre-determined comparable benchmark local governments or public sector agencies.
3. Understand the services provided by the local government along with the nature of the current issues in the organization and in the community, and then compare these with the individual's expertise and proven ability to resolve those issues.
4. Identify the local government's current financial position, its ability to pay, and the existing policies toward compensation relative to market conditions.

In addition:
5. The individual's credentials, experience and expertise may be used as factors to set salary.
6. In areas where cost of living is high and the governing body wants the manager to reside within the community, salary negotiations may take into account additional compensation. In addition, other unique and special circumstances may be taken into consideration, such as difficult recruitment markets and the particularly challenging needs of the public agency.
7. During periods prior to the beginning of employment when terms and conditions are being negotiated and finalized, each party should also seek legal advice as needed and appropriate.

Severance

Severance provisions established in the employment agreement must be both reasonable and affordable so that the cost of the severance is not an impediment to fulfilling the governing body's right to terminate a manager's service, if desired. The ICMA Model Employment agreement recommends a one year severance but recognizes that the length of service with an organization may justify a higher severance.

Compensation changes
1. Benefits and salary increases should be reasonably comparable to those that local government executives receive within the designated benchmark or regional market area and generally consistent with other employees.
2. Merit adjustments or bonuses should be contingent upon performance and the overall financial position of the local government to afford additional compensation payments. Provisions regarding consideration of periodic merit adjustments in salary should be pre-determined.
3. Local government managers must recognize and effectively manage conflicts of interest inherent in compensation changes. Managers should avoid taking steps regarding pension and other benefits where they will be the sole or primary beneficiary of the change. Examples include:
   • Dramatically increasing salary thereby leading to pension spiking.
   • Recommending or implementing single highest year to determine retirement benefits.
4. An individual should receive a single salary that recognizes all duties and responsibilities assigned rather than different salaries for different assignments.
5. Local government managers should not put their personal compensation interests before the good of the overall organization and that of the citizens.

Transparency
1. Local government managers should provide their total compensation package to the governing body when requesting compensation changes so that the governing body has a comprehensive view of the compensation package.
2. In the interest of fairness and transparency, there should be full disclosure to the governing body, prior to formal consideration and approval, of the potential cost of any benefit changes negotiated during employment.
3. When the terms and conditions of employment are being renegotiated with the employer and at the end when the employment is being terminated, ICMA members have a duty to advise the elected officials to seek legal advice.
4. In the interests of transparency, the salary plan and salary ranges for local government positions, including that of the manager, should be publicly accessible on the agency's website.

General Compensation Guidelines for all Employees
1. Each local government should establish benchmark agencies which are determined using set criteria, such as, but not limited to:
   - Close geographic proximity
   - Similarity with regard to the nature of the services provided
   - Similarity in employer size/population size
   - Similarity in the socio-economic makeup of the population
   - Other similar employers in the immediate area
2. The local government should develop appropriate compensation levels that are in line with their labor market. Doing so will enable the organization to establish and maintain a reputation as a competitive, fair, and equitable employer as well as a good steward of public funds.
3. When considering any salary or benefit changes, the immediate and anticipated long-term financial resources of the organization always should be taken into account.
4. Appropriate financial practices should be followed to both disclose and properly fund any related future liability to the local government.
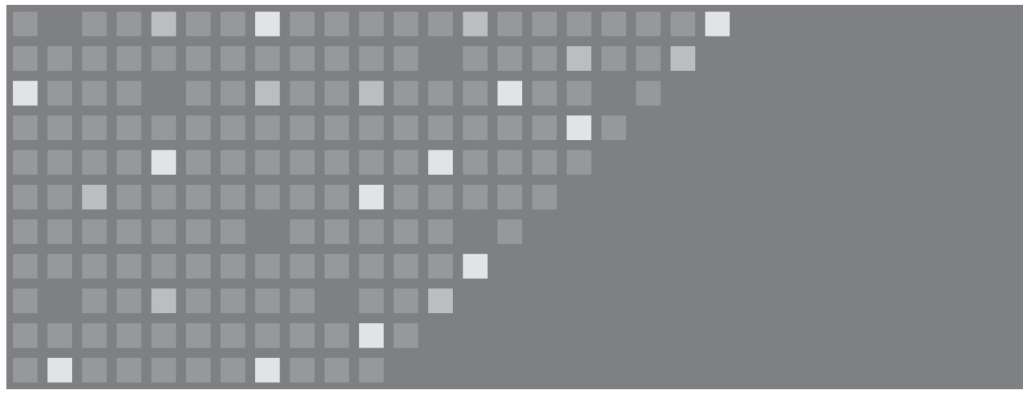
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Hiring a Professional Manager

Determining the Value of Professional Administrator or Manager

Life, Well Run

QUESTIONNAIRE TO HELP DETERMINE WHETHER A PAID PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER SHOULD BE RETAINED:

Cost-Benefit Analysis

$_____ What is the approximate value of grants, loans, and other outside intergovernmental revenues that may have been or are currently available, but which the city leaders have not been able to pursue because they do not have the expertise to apply and/or lobby for them?

$_____ How much is paid to outside planners and/or engineers to perform routine or non technical tasks (meeting with citizens, writing grants or letters to developers, managing contracts and projects, supervising bidding, etc.)?

$_____ To what extent would the city's annual legal service fees be reduced if there was a professional administrator/manager employed by the city?

$_____ Has the city ever had to pay a fine or penalty to a state agency because it has not made timely submission of a report, permit or other document? If so, what was the dollar value?

$_____ What is the differential cost between professional service contract fees (by % of base service) negotiated by the city, compared to similar contracts negotiated by management professionals in nearby communities?

$_____ Has the city ever had to pay a financial settlement to a former employee because his/her involuntary termination was not handled properly or because they made an allegation of discrimination and the city did not have proper policies in place to respond? If so, what was the dollar value?

$_____ Has the city ever received an adverse or "qualified" opinion from its outside auditor based on incomplete accounting practices or the condition of its financial records? If so, the auditor can identify the cost of these shortcomings to the city and estimate the auditing fee added to sort out the problem(s) and reorganize records.

Lost Opportunity Analysis

_____ Have there been development projects, land use planning decisions (to limit or encourage growth comprehensively or reactively on a site-by-site basis), construction project planning, opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation, etc. which have proceeded (or not proceeded) because the community did not have the technical expertise, the negotiation skills, or the ability to foresee positive or negative impacts?

_____ Are there any areas of technical expertise that council members believe the city lacks, and that it has not been able to obtain at reasonable expense through its staff, elected

officials, and community volunteers? E.g., does the council have a plan for funding mandated infrastructure?

Process Analysis

_____ In the opinion of the City Council and/or citizens, is the organization's response(s) to problems, opportunities, requests, and complaints timely?

_____ Is vital information communicated to all the members of the governing body so that they have the whole story and understand the "big picture"?

_____ Is there one person charged with making sure that actions of one department are consistent and compatible with those of another department? Is this communication effective and in accordance with the governing body's general directions?

_____ Are proper risk assessments ever delayed because staff or elected officials are uncertain about how to assess and/or manage risk?

_____ Does the City Council believe that its directives are being implemented in a timely manner by the parties responsible for their enactment?

_____ Does the city budget realistically account for the costs of future needs?

_____ Does the City Council believe it spends too much time at council and/or committee meetings discussing small details and technical issues, rather than policy, contracts, planning, and general community improvement?

Political (public perception & council motives) Analysis

_____ Are council members perceived by the public as leading or reacting?

_____ Are form-of-government discussions motivated more by a desire to increase the separation of powers between elected officials and the staff or by a desire to more effectively use power?

_____ Is the city's current organizational structure advancing the governing body's short and long term goals and objectives or is it a barrier to their implementation? (Focus on form and structure, not on individuals.)

_____ If the answers to the questions above (cost-benefit, loss opportunity and process analyses) were objectively set before local citizens, would a majority support changing to a manager/administrator form of government?

- Prepared by Scot Wrighton for the Georgia city/County Management Association

Q

Sample: Chief Administrator Job Descriptions

Life, Well Run

Sample Job Descriptions: Chief Administrative Officer

City Administrator

JOB SUMMARY:
Plans, directs, manages and oversees the activities and operation of the City organization including: water, wastewater collection and treatment, gas and electric utilities, police services, finance, streets and storm drainage, code enforcement, airport, parks including historic areas, library and contracted services for solid waste collection.

ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS:
The fundamental duties and tasks that define the job are:

- Performs high level administrative, technical and professional work in directing and supervising the administration of the day-to-day management of the City in accordance with policy established by the City Council, City, state and Federal laws, regulations and guidelines.
- Monitors and evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery methods and procedures; assesses and monitors workload, administrative and support systems, and internal reporting relationships; identifies opportunities for improvement and directs the implementation of changes.
- Represents the City and meets and confers with citizens, business entities, elected officials and outside agencies to discuss City policies, procedures and remedy problems and resolve inquires and complaints from both internal and external sources; and negotiates and resolves sensitive, significant and controversial issues.
- Manages the development and implementation of City/departmental goals, objectives, policies and priorities within City policy, appropriate service and staffing levels and allocates resources accordingly.
- Manages the development and administration of the City budget, revenue and expenditure forecasts of funds needed for staffing, equipment, materials and supplies; directs and approves expenditures in accordance with City policy; and directs the preparation and implementation of budgetary adjustments as necessary.
- Stays abreast of new trends and innovation in the field of public management and administration.
- Advises the City Council on matters of policy and maintains weekly, and more frequent if necessary, written communication with Council.
- Reviews and analyzes reports, legislation, court cases and related matters and directs or personally conducts studies, research and investigation on a wide variety of administrative and technical areas.
- Prepares and recommends long-range plans for City service programs and develops specific proposals for action on current and future City needs.

Sample Job Descriptions: Chief Administrative Officer

JOB REQUIREMENTS:
EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

- Bachelor's degree in public administration, political science, business management or a closely related field from an accredited college or university
- 5 years of experience as City Manager, Assistant City Manager and/or executive experience; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES: Utilized in the performance of the essential functions of the job.

- Knowledge of operational characteristics, services and activities of municipal administration and organization
- Knowledge of modern policies and practices of public administration; working knowledge of municipal finance, public works, public safety, community development, human resources, economic development and airport Knowledge of and skill in advanced principles and practices used municipal budget preparation and administration
- Skill in preparing and administering municipal budgets and programs
- Knowledge of pertinent Federal, State and local laws, ordinances, statutes and regulations
- Ability to develop, implement and administer goals, objectives and procedures for providing effective and efficient services for the City
- Ability to analyze problems, identify alternative solutions, project consequences of proposed actions and implement recommendation in support of established goals
- Ability to identify and respond to community and City Council issues, concerns and needs
- Ability to communicate effectively with diverse groups of individuals using tack and diplomacy

LICENSE REQUIRED:

- Must possess a valid Texas Driver's License and have a satisfactory driving record, or ability to obtain a driver's license within 30 days of commencing employment.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS:

- Master's Degree in Public Administration
- Extensive senior level experience as a City/County Manager/Administrator, Assistant City Manager/Administrator, Department Head or similar position
- Familiarity with Texas laws and programs
- Knowledge of and/or experience managing:
  - Water and Wastewater Functions

Sample Job Descriptions: Chief Administrative Officer

- o Gas and Electric Utilities
- o Airport Operations
- o Capital Improvement Programs
- o Economic Development
- o Historic Preservation Programs

Sample Job Descriptions: Chief Administrative Officer

City Manager

The City Manager is appointed by the Mayor and City Council and oversees the operation, programs, and personnel of all City departments. The City Manager develops and issues administrative rules and procedures necessary to ensure proper functions of all departments and all duties and responsibilities granted by federal and state law and the city code. The City Manager is the chief administrative officer for the City and is responsible for implementation of City Council direction. Twenty-seven full-time, seven part-time, and seven seasonal staff, are employed by the City of Mound. Five departments report to the Manager, including Finance & Administration, Community Development, Public Works, Liquor, and Fire. Several consultants also serve the City including finance, legal counsel, assessing, planning, and engineering. The 2016 proposed operating budget for the general fund is $5,368,219. The City Manager oversees the following departments:

Finance and Administration:
Accounting, investing, IT, risk management, reporting, budgeting, capital planning, audits, human resources, payroll, accounts payable, utility billing, public housing, elections, official records, licensing, legal publications, assessments, and dock administration.

Fire:
Firefighting/EMS, hazardous materials, MCI, technical rescue, inspections, and emergency preparedness.

Municipal Liquor Operations:
 Consists of one off-sale retail store

Community Development:
Planning and zoning administration, building code, inspections, subdivisions, redevelopment, and community development

Public Works: parks, docks, city hall, facilities, streets and grounds maintenance, water, sewer, storm sewer, and recycling enterprises.

Duties and Responsibilities of the City Manager:

- Coordinates activities of the City Council including preparation of agendas, packets, and reports

Sample Job Descriptions: Chief Administrative Officer

- Works with City Commissions, presents recommendations concerning policies, objectives, and specific actions
- Ensures an effective municipal organization, including recommending changes in organizational structure as appropriate
- Establishes goals & objectives for department heads, prepares work plans, assigns work, delegates authority/responsibility
- Creates, establishes, and monitors City policies and procedures, ordinances and resolutions
- Responsible for effective management and use of City assets, including effective investment of available funds, proper accounting practices to control financial assets, and providing for financial planning
- Prepares and presents the annual operating budget and capital improvement budget
- Authorizes purchases and expenditures
- Provides professional support to the City Council by attending meetings to report on City affairs, presents recommendations concerning policies and objectives, as well as specific actions, participates in discussion, and implements council decisions
- Attends all City Council meetings and other public meetings as needed, ensures council decisions are implemented
- Ensures proper public relations by following-up with all departments to ensure public services are efficiently provided and that all complaints, concerns, and public contacts are effectively handled
- Assists with legal activities such as monitoring, drafting legislation, and coordinating with the City Attorney
- Stays current with developments in both the public administration and organizational development fields, and cooperates with other governmental units and municipalities on matters of mutual interest
- Oversees the work of financial, engineering, legal, and other consultants
- Maintains effective relationships with school district, businesses, community organizations, residents, and other key stakeholders, representing the City of Mound in a positive manner
- Manages and administers personnel policies and programs, including compensation practices, labor/employee relations, contract negotiations, and staff recruitment
- Performs overall employee management including evaluation systems and compensation adjustments per City Council approved budget guidelines
- Responsible for the completion of employee performance evaluations in conformity with City guidelines and timelines
- Responsible for the hiring, directing, development, and discipline of employees

Sample Job Descriptions: Chief Administrative Officer

- Resolves employee problems, addresses complaints, and sets the organizational culture
- Ensures the proper execution and oversight of City contracts
- Stays abreast of legislative issues, specifically those affecting local government
- Oversees enforcement and recommends changes to ordinances and resolutions

The Ideal Candidate:

The ideal candidate is an experienced and personable City Manager or Administrator with demonstrated leadership skills and strong customer service skills.

Other desired skills and character traits include:

- Trustworthy, ethical, respectful, and approachable leader who listens carefully and thoughtfully to others
- Builds trusting relationships with Council, staff, and community
- Prioritizes work, meets deadlines and manages multiple tasks
- Embraces the community and proactively engages with the public and community groups while participating in activities
- Effective oral and written communicator, including public presentations
- Effective with creating partnerships with businesses, civic groups, and outside governments and organizations
- Promotes staff leadership and development, by encouraging creativity, ownership, and skill development
- Strategic thinker
- Big-picture budgeting experience with thorough knowledge of financial government management, including public financing techniques (TIF, bonds, grants, CIP)
- Project management experience, with attention to detail
- Knowledgeable in infrastructure repair and replacement, downtown development/redevelopment and business, labor and other negotiations

Sample Job Descriptions: Chief Administrative Officer

City Administrator

The Position

The City Administrator is responsible for managing the operations of the city and reports directly to the City Council as set forth in by the City Charter. The City Administrator directs, supervises and coordinates the work of Safety Services, Public Services, Community Services, Financial and Administrative Services, Human Resources Services, Communications, the City Clerk and additional services as the Council may, from time to time, designate. The City Administrator leads strategic planning, goal setting and policy development in support of the City's Guiding Principles and Goals. The City Administrator is responsible for creating and sustaining the City of Ann Arbor as a results-oriented organization through expertise in organizational effectiveness, performance, measurement and budget accountability.

Additional duties and responsibilities are as follows:

- Plan, coordinate and administer programs, inter-service area projects, contracts, events and studies.
- Plan, administer and evaluate management programs and policies related to the City Administrator's office.
- Lead, direct and supervise the City's Service Areas and direct reports.
- Lead the budget process and assemble the budgets as prepared by the Service Areas and present the same to the Council, with the recommendations, in accordance with the applicable provisions of the City Charter.
- Working with the various Service Area Administrators, establish reporting procedures to ensure timely knowledge of the Service Areas businesses, including periodic or special reports as he/she or the Council may deem necessary.
- In case of conflict of authority between administrative units, or in case of absence of administrative authority occasioned by inadequacy of Charter or ordinance provisions, resolve the conflict or supply the necessary authority, so far as may be consistent with law, the Charter, and the ordinances of the city, and direct the necessary action to be taken, making a full report immediately to the Council of the problem, action taken and recommendation for corrective legislation.
- Attend all meetings of the Council, with the right to take part in all discussions, but without the right to vote.
- Recommend to the Council, from time to time, such measures as he/she deems necessary or appropriate for the improvement of the City or its services.

Sample Job Descriptions: Chief Administrative Officer

- Furnish the Council with information respecting the City's affairs and prepare and submit such reports as may be required, including an annual report which shall consolidate the reports of the several administrative units.
- Possess such further powers and perform such additional duties as may be granted to or required of him/her, from time to time, by the Council, so far as may be consistent with state law and the City Charter.

Related Work:

- Oversee various studies and analyses; coordinate and assemble the findings and recommendations of the Service Area Administrators related to various systems, programs, procedures and administrative practices.
- Provide leadership on issues of organizational culture, communication and community relations.
- Collaborate with Human Resources Services to determine leadership development needs and to design and sponsor leadership development programming for the city.
- Perform other duties as assigned.

Knowledge of:

- Functions of City Council and City government and associated Boards and Commissions
- Public Sector collective bargaining environments
- Multi-cultural environments where issues are openly debated
- Principles and best practices of financial management, municipal organizations, public administration, leadership development, executive coaching and change management
- Principles and techniques of public relations
- Outstanding customer service principles and practices
- Large multi-service organizations with full development and administration of budgets
- Contemporary management principles and supervisory practices
- Pertinent City, County, State and Federal laws, regulations and ordinances

Skills and Abilities:

- Supervise a large multi-service organization, including development and administration of the budget and associated city goals and objectives
- Develop and sustain positive working relationships with senior University of Michigan administrative personnel

Sample Job Descriptions: Chief Administrative Officer

- Demonstrate successful working relationships in a partisan political environment
- Demonstrate excellent communication skills including advanced techniques in facilitating communication among various city components and constituencies
- Engender trust and demonstrate advanced interpersonal skills
- Demonstrate team leadership by guiding collaborative efforts, direction and focus, while delegating authority appropriately
- Take strong initiative and lead innovation, and implement city initiatives effectively
- Lead an organization without need of personal recognition or ego gratification
- Develop strong professional staff, provide feedback, guidance and opportunities for development
- Work with Council in an honest, forthright manner while maintaining focus on the goals and objectives of the organization
- Provide leadership to the Council and also accept direction from the Council
- Accept criticism in a mature manner and not be unduly influenced by special interests or factions
- Demonstrate a strong sense of personal values and listen and process different viewpoints calmly and rationally
- Demonstrate organizational awareness by understanding and championing the identities and respective roles of the Administrator, City Service Areas, Mayor and Council, Boards and Commissions, community organizations and citizens
- Demonstrate personal confidence and work directly with all elements of the community, including the business community, special interest advocacy groups, neighborhood associations and minority groups

The Ideal Candidate
The ideal candidate will have:

- Extensive experience in public sector management, preferably as a City Administrator or City Manager in a city with a population of over 50,000, or as a County Administrator in an urban setting which has a wide diversity of cultural, political, and service issues
- Experience must include direct responsibility for management and supervision of a large multi-service organization with full responsibility for development and administration of the budget
- Experience with a major university, and prior experience with developing positive working relationships with senior university administration personnel would be a definite asset

Sample Job Descriptions: Chief Administrative Officer

- Candidate must have experience in a multi-cultural and politically active environment where issues are openly debated. A background that includes serving in positions that required active community contact and open communications between citizens, council, and staff is necessary

Education:

Interested candidates should possess a Bachelor's Degree from an accredited college or university in Public or Business Administration or related field; a Master's degree is preferred.

Hiring a Professional Manager
Model Employment Agreement

Life, Well Run

Employment Agreement

ICMA

ICMA advances professional local government worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing professional management of local government. ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, provides member support; publications, data, and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to more than 9,000 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world. The management decisions made by ICMA's members affect 185 million individuals living in thousands of communities, from small villages and towns to large metropolitan areas.

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Contents

Introduction

This Agreement, made and entered into this [date], by and between the [local government] of [state], [town/city/county] a municipal corporation, (hereinafter called "Employer") and [name], (hereinafter called "Employee") an individual who has the education, training and experience in local government management and who, as a member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), is subject to the ICMA Code of Ethics, both of whom agree as follows:

Section 1: Term

Recommended Language

A. This agreement shall remain in full force and effect from [date] until terminated by the Employer or Employee as provided in Section 9, 10 or 11 of this agreement.

Option 1

The term of this agreement shall be for an initial period of [#] years from [date] to [date]. This Agreement shall automatically be renewed on its anniversary date for a [#] year term unless notice that the Agreement shall terminate is given at least [#] months (12 months recommended) before the expiration date. In the event the agreement is not renewed, all compensation, benefits and requirements of the agreement shall remain in effect until the expiration of the term of the Agreement unless Employee voluntarily resigns.

In the event that the Employee is terminated, as defined in Section 9 of this agreement, the Employee shall be entitled to all compensation including salary, accrued vacation and sick leave, car allowance paid in lump sum or in a continuation of salary on the existing [biweekly/monthly] basis, at the Employee's option, plus continuation of all benefits for the remainder of the term of this agreement.

Section 2: Duties and Authority

Recommended Language

A. Employer agrees to employ [name] as [title] to perform the functions and duties specified in [legal reference] of the [local government] charter and/or by ordinance (#) dated [legal reference] of the [local govern- ment] code and to perform other legally permissible and proper duties and functions without interference.

B. Employee is the chief executive officer of the Employer and shall faithfully perform the duties as prescribed in the job description as set forth in the Employer's charter and/or ordinances and as may be lawfully assigned by the Employer and shall comply with all lawful governing body directives, state and federal law, Employer policies, rules and ordinances as they exist or may hereafter be amended.

C. Specifically, it shall be the duty of the Employee to employ on behalf of the Employer all other employees of the organization consistent with the policies of the governing body and the ordinances and charter of the Employer.

D. It shall also be the duty of the Employee to direct, assign, reassign and evaluate all of the employees of the Employer consistent with policies, ordinances, charter, state and federal law.

E. It shall also be the duty of the Employee to organize, reorganize and arrange the staff of the Employer and to develop and establish internal regulations, rules and procedures which the Employee deems necessary for the efficient and effective operation of the Employer consistent with the lawful directives, policies, ordinances, state and federal law.

F. It shall also be the duty of the Employee to accept all resignations of employees of the Employer consistent with the policies, ordinances, state and federal law, except the Employee's resignation which must be accepted by the governing body.

G. The Employee shall perform the duties of (city, county or town) manager of the Employer with reasonable care, diligence, skill and expertise.

H. All duties assigned to the Employee by the governing body shall be appropriate to and consistent with the professional role and responsibility of the Employee.

I. The Employee cannot be reassigned from the position of (city, county or town) manager to another position without the Employee's express written consent.

J. The Employee or designee shall attend, and shall be permitted to attend, all meetings of the governing body, both public and closed, with the exception of those closed meetings devoted to the subject of this Agreement, or any amendment thereto or the Employee's evaluation or otherwise consistent with state law.

K. The governing body, individually and collectively, shall refer in a timely manner all substantive criticisms, complaints and suggestions called to their attention to the Employee for study and/or appropriate action.

Section 3: Compensation

Recommended Language

A. Base Salary: Employer agrees to pay Employee an annual base salary of [$ amount], payable in installments at the same time that the other management employees of the Employer are paid.

B. This agreement shall be automatically amended to reflect any salary adjustments that are provided or required by the Employer's compensation policies to include all salary adjustments on the same basis as applied to the executive classification of employees.

C. In addition, consideration shall be given on an annual basis to an increase in compensation.

Options for Section 3. C Compensation

Option 1

The Employer agrees to increase the compensation of the Employee dependent upon the results of the performance evaluation conducted under the provisions of Section 12 of this Agreement. Increased compensation can be in the form of a salary increase and/or performance incentive and/or an increase in benefits.

Option 2

The Employer agrees to increase the compensation of the Employee dependent upon the results of the performance evaluation conducted under the provisions of Section 12 of this Agreement in addition to providing a fixed annual increase in the Employee's salary based on an agreed upon economic indicator, such as the Consumer Price Index.

Option 3

The Employer agrees to increase the compensation by [%] each year.

Option 4

The Employer agrees to increase the compensation each year by at least the average across the board increase granted to other employees of the Employer.

D. At any time during the term of the Agreement, Employer may, in its discretion, review and adjust the salary of the Employee, but in no event shall the Employee be paid less than the salary set forth in Section 3.A. of the Agreement except by mutual written agreement between Employee and Employer. Such adjustments, if any, shall be made pursuant to a lawful governing body action. In such event, Employer and Employee agree to provide their best efforts and reasonable cooperation to execute a new agreement incorporating the adjusted salary.

E. Except as otherwise provided in this Agreement, the Employee shall be entitled, at a minimum, to the highest level of benefits enjoyed by and/or available to other employees, department heads or general employees of the Employer as provided by the Employer's policies, Charter, ordinances, or personnel rules and regulations or other practices.

Section 4: Health, Disability and Life Insurance Benefits

Recommended Language

A. The Employer agrees to provide and to pay the premiums for health, hospitalization, surgical, vision, dental and comprehensive medical insurance for the Employee and his/her dependents, at a minimum, equal to that which is provided to all other employees of the [local government]. In the event no such plan exists, Employer agrees to provide coverage for the Employee and dependents in a manner mutually agreed upon by Employer and Employee.

B. The Employer agrees to put into force and to make required premium payments for short term and long term disability coverage for the Employee.

C. The Employee may elect to submit once per calendar year to a complete physical examination, including a cardio-vascular examination, by a qualified physician selected by the Employee, the cost of which shall be paid by the Employer.

D. The Employer shall pay the amount of premium due for term life insurance in the amount of three (3) times the Employee's annual base salary, including all increases in the base salary during the life of this agreement. The Employee shall name the beneficiary of the life insurance policy.

Option 1

A. The Employer agrees to provide for full health, hospitalization, surgical, vision, dental and comprehensive medical insurance for the Employee and his/her dependents on an equivalent basis to that which is provided to all other employees of the [local government]. and Employer shall pay all premiums for the Employee and the Employee's dependents. In the event no such plan exists, Employer agrees to provide full coverage for the Employee and dependents in a manner mutually agreed upon by Employer and Employee.

B. The Employer agrees to put into force and to make required premium payments for short term and long term disability coverage for the Employee.

C. The Employee may elect to submit once per calendar year to a complete physical examination, including a cardio-vascular examination, by a qualified physician selected by the Employee, the cost of which shall be paid by the Employer.

D. The Employer shall pay the amount of premium due for term life insurance in the face amount of three (3) times the Employee's annual base salary, including all increases in the base salary during the life of this agreement. If such coverage is not available through the Employer's insurance carrier or the Employee elects to obtain coverage through a different insurance carrier, the Employer shall reimburse the Employee for the cost of the premiums in an amount equal to the same value as that provided by the Employer's insurance carrier. The Employee shall own the life insurance policy and the life insurance policy shall be in the name of the Employee and the Employee shall have the right to name the beneficiary of the life insurance policy.

Option 2

E. The Employer shall provide business travel insurance for the Employee while the Employee is traveling on the Employer's business, and the Employee shall name the beneficiary thereof. Should the Employee die while on travel for the Employer, the Employer shall cover the full cost of retrieving and transporting the Employee's remains back to the custody of the Employee's family.

Section 5: Vacation, Sick, and Military Leave

Recommended Language

A. Upon commencing employment, the Employee shall be credited with [#] accrued sick leave hours and [#] accrued vacation leave hours. In addition, beginning the first day of employment, Employee shall accrue sick leave and vacation leave on an annual basis, at a minimum, at the highest rate provided or available to any other employees, under the same rules and provisions applicable to other employees.

Option 1

Beginning the first day of employment, Employee shall accrue sick leave and vacation leave on an annual basis equivalent to the number of years served in the profession.

B. Upon commencing employment, the Employee shall have access to a bank of 180 sick days to be used in the case of serious medical conditions. This leave can only be used to provide coverage during the waiting period between the onset of illness or disability and the point at which short or long term disability coverage takes effect and may be renewed after each occurrence.

C. The Employee is entitled to accrue all unused leave, without limit, and in the event the Employee's employment is terminated, either voluntarily or involuntarily, the Employee shall be compensated for all accrued vacation time, all paid holidays, executive leave, and other benefits to date.

D. The Employee shall be entitled to military reserve leave time pursuant to state law and [local government] policy.

Option 2

E. The Employee shall annually be credited with five (5) days of executive leave.

Section 6: Automobile

Recommended Language

The Employee's duties require exclusive and unrestricted use of an automobile to be mutually agreed upon and provided to the Employee at the Employer's cost, subject to approval by Employer which shall not be withheld without good cause. It shall be mutually agreed upon whether the vehicle is purchased by the Employer, provided under lease to the Employer or to the Employee, or provided through a monthly allowance.

Option 1—Monthly Vehicle Allowance

The Employer agrees to pay to the Employee, during the term of this Agreement and in addition to other salary and benefits herein provided, the sum of [dollar amount] per year, payable monthly, as a vehicle allowance to be used to purchase, lease, or own, operate and maintain a vehicle. The monthly allowance shall be increased annually by [% or $] amount. The Employee shall be responsible for paying for liability, property damage, and comprehensive insurance coverage upon such vehicle and shall further be responsible for all expenses attendant to the purchase, operation, maintenance, repair, and regular replacement of said vehicle. The Employer shall reimburse the Employee at the IRS standard mileage rate for any business use of the vehicle beyond the greater [local government] area. For purposes of this Section, use of the car within the greater [local government] area is defined as travel to locations within a _____ mile (recommended one hundred (100) mile) radius of the local government limits.)

Option 2—Employer Provided Vehicle

The Employer shall be responsible for paying for liability, property damage, and comprehensive insurance, and for the purchase (or lease), operation, maintenance, repair, and regular replacement of a full-size automobile.

Section 7: Retirement

Recommended Language

The Employer agrees to enroll the Employee into the applicable state or local retirement system and to make all the appropriate contributions on the Employee's behalf.

In addition to the Employer's payment to the state or local retirement system (as applicable) referenced above, Employer agrees to execute and keep in force all necessary agreements provided by ICMA Retirement Corporation [ICMA-RC] or any other Section 457 deferred compensation plan for Employee's [continued] participation in said supplementary retirement plan. In addition to the base salary paid by the Employer to Employee, Employer agrees to pay an amount equal to [percentage of Employee's base salary, fixed dollar amount of [$] , or maximum dollar amount permissible under Federal and state law into the designated plan on the Employee's

behalf, in equal proportionate amount each pay period. The Employer and Employee shall fully disclose to each other the financial impact of any amendment to the terms of Employee's retirement benefit.

In lieu of making a contribution to a Section 457 deferred compensation plan, the dollar value of this contribution may be used, at the Employee's option, to purchase previous service from another qualified plan.

Option 1

Recognizing that effective service with the community is based in part on the stability provided through a long-term relationship, the Employer shall provide a retirement annuity, as directed by the Employee, at a rate of [dollar amount], payable at the completion of each quarter of the fiscal year. This annuity serves as a retirement contribution and does not require further action of the Employer.

Option 2

The Employer shall adopt a qualified 401(a) defined contribution plan offered through ICMA Retirement Corporation for the Employee in the form of a money purchase plan to which the Employer shall contribute [%] of compensation annually. The 401(a) plan shall be established as an employer paid plan with non-discretionary contributions by the Employer and the Employee shall have no right to receive such contributions in cash. The 401(a) plan shall be established under a written plan document that meets the requirements of the IRS Code and such document is hereby incorporated herein by reference. The funds for the 401(a) plan shall be invested in such investment vehicles as are allowable under the IRS Code and the Employee shall make the sole determination as to how the funds are invested.

Option 2 A: The Employee shall be required to contribute [%] of base salary or [dollar amount] annually on a pre-tax basis as a condition of participation.

Option3

The Employer shall adopt a qualified 401(a) profit-sharing plan offered through ICMA Retirement Corporation for the Employee in the form of a money purchase plan to which the Employer shall contribute [%] of all performance bonuses annually.

Option 3 A: The Employee shall be required to contribute [%] of base salary or [dollar amount] annually on a pre-tax basis as a condition of participation.

Section 8: General Business Expenses

Recommended Language

A. Employer agrees to budget and pay for professional dues, including but not limited to the International City/County Management Association, and subscriptions of the Employee necessary for continuation and full participation in national, regional, state, and local associations, and organizations necessary and desirable for the Employee's continued professional participation, growth, and advancement, and for the good of the Employer.

B. Employer agrees to budget and pay for travel and subsistence expenses of Employee for profes- sional and official travel, meetings, and occasions to adequately continue the professional development of Employee and to pursue necessary official functions for Employer, including but not limited to the ICMA Annual Conference, the state league of municipalities, and such other national, regional, state, and local governmental groups and committees in which Employee serves as a member.

C. Employer also agrees to budget and pay for travel and subsistence expenses of Employee for short courses, institutes, and seminars that are necessary for the Employee's professional development and for the good of the Employer.

D. Employer recognizes that certain expenses of a non-personal but job related nature are incurred by Employee, and agrees to reimburse or to pay said gen- eral expenses. Such expenses may include meals where Employer business is being discussed or conducted and participation in social events of various organizations when representing the Employer. Such expenditures are subject to annual budget constraints as well as state and Employer ethics and purchasing policies. The finance director is authorized to disburse such moneys upon receipt of duly executed expense or petty cash vouchers, receipts, statements or personal affidavits.

E. The Employer acknowledges the value of having Employee participate and be directly involved in local civic clubs or organizations. Accordingly, Employer

shall pay for the reasonable membership fees and/or dues to enable the Employee to become an active member in local civic clubs or organizations.

F. Recognizing the importance of constant communication and maximum productivity, Employer shall provide Employee, for business and personal use, a laptop computer, software, internet connection at Employee's permanent residence, mobile phone/personal digital assistant and/or tablet computer for business and personal use, and pager for business and personal use required for the Employee to perform their duties and to maintain communication with Employer's staff and officials as well as other individuals who are doing business with Employer. Upon termination of Employee's employment, the equipment described herein shall become the property of the Employee and at the discretion of the Employee any mobile phone number shall be transferred to the Employee.

Section 9: Termination

Recommended Language

A. For the purpose of this agreement, termination shall occur when:

1. The majority of the governing body votes to terminate the Employee in accordance with (cite applicable local law) at a properly posted and duly authorized public meeting.

2. If the Employer, citizens or legislature acts to amend any provisions of the [charter, code, enabling legislation] pertaining to the role, powers, duties, authority, responsibilities of the Employee's position that substantially changes the form of government, the Employee shall have the right to declare that such amendments constitute termination.

3. If the Employer reduces the base salary, compensation or any other financial benefit of the Employee, unless it is applied in no greater percentage than the average reduction of all department heads, such action shall constitute a breach of this agreement and will be regarded as a termination.

4. If the Employee resigns following an offer to accept resignation, whether formal or informal, by the Employer as representative of the majority of the governing body that the Employee resign, then the Employee may declare a termination as of the date of the suggestion.

5. Breach of contract declared by either party with a 30 day cure period for either Employee or Employer. Written notice of a breach of contract shall be provided in accordance with the provisions of Section 20.

Option 1

A. In the event the Employee is terminated by the Employer during the six (6) months immediately following the seating and swearing-in of one or more new governing body members, and during such time that Employee is willing and able to perform his duties under this Agreement, then, Employer agrees to pay Severance in accordance with Section 10 plus salary and benefits in accordance with Section 10 for any portion of the six months not worked.

Section 10: Severance

Severance shall be paid to the Employee when employment is terminated as defined in Section 9.

A. If the Employee is terminated, the Employer shall provide a minimum severance payment equal to twelve (12) months salary at the then current rate of pay. This severance shall be paid in a lump sum or in a continuation of salary on the existing [biweekly/monthly] basis, at the Employee's option,

B. The Employee shall also be compensated for all sick leave, vacation leave, and all paid holidays.

The Employer agrees to make a contribution to the Employee's deferred compensation account on the value of this compensation calculated using the then current annual salary of Employee at the date of termination divided by two thousand and eighty (2080) hours. If the amount of the contribution under this Section exceeds the limit under the Code for a contribution to the Deferred Compensation plan, the remainder shall be paid to the Employee in a lump sum as taxable compensation.

C. For a minimum period of one year following termination, the Employer shall pay the cost to continue the following benefits:

1. Health insurance for the employee and all dependents as provided in Section 4A, after which time, Employee will be provided access to health insurance pursuant to the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act ("COBRA").

2. Life insurance as provided in Section 4D

3. Short-term and long-term disability as provided in Section 4B

4. Car allowance or payment of lease, or provide option to buy Employer's vehicle at depreciated value

5. Out placement services should the employee desire

them in an amount not to exceed [$10,000 to $15,000 recommended], and

6. Any other available benefits.

D. If the Employee is terminated because of a felony conviction, then the Employer is not obligated to pay severance under this section.

E. The termination and severance of Employee shall be in accordance with the "Separation Agreement" agreed to by Employer and Employee. A template for such agreement is provided by ICMA, and is incorporated herein by reference.

Provisions for severance and severance related benefits may be governed by state and/or local law. Before entering into negotiations, both parties should be knowledgeable about relevant legal provisions.

Section 11: Resignation

In the event that the Employee voluntarily resigns his/her position with the Employer, the Employee shall

provide a minimum of 30 days notice unless Employer and Employee agree otherwise.

Section 12: Performance Evaluation

A. Employer shall annually review the performance of the Employee in [month] subject to a process, form, criteria, and format for the evaluation which shall be mutually agreed upon by the Employer and Employee.

The annual evaluation process, at a minimum, shall include the opportunity for both parties to: (1) conduct a formulary session where the governing body and the Employee meet first to discuss goals and objectives of both the past twelve (12) month performance period as well as the upcoming twelve (12) month performance period, (2) following that formulary discussion, prepare a written evaluation of goals and objectives for the past and upcoming year, (3) next meet and discuss the written evaluation of these goals and objectives, and (4) present a written summary of the evaluation results to the Employee. The final written evaluation should be completed and delivered to the Employee within 30 days of the initial formulary evaluation meeting.

B. Unless the Employee expressly requests otherwise in writing, the evaluation of the Employee shall at all times be conducted in executive session of the governing body and shall be considered confidential to the extent permitted by law. Nothing herein shall prohibit the Employer or Employee from sharing the content of the Employee's evaluation with their respective legal counsel.

C. In the event the Employer deems the evaluation instrument, format and/or procedure is to be modified by the Employer and such modifications would require new or different performance expectations, then the Employee shall be provided a reasonable period of time to demonstrate such expected performance before being evaluated.

D. In the event the Employee is an ICMA Credentialed Manager, the multi-rater evaluation tool will be utilized at a minimum of every five years.

Section 13: Hours of Work

It is recognized that the Employee must devote a great deal of time outside the normal office hours on business for the Employer, and to that end Employee shall be allowed to establish an appropriate work schedule. The schedule shall be appropriate to the needs of the Employer and shall allow Employee to faithfully perform his or her assigned duties and responsibilities.

Section 14: Ethical Commitments

Employee will at all times uphold the tenets of the ICMA Code of Ethics, a copy of which is attached hereto and incorporated herein. Specifically, Employee shall not endorse candidates, make financial contributions, sign or circulate petitions, or participate in fund-raising activities for individuals seeking or holding elected office, nor seek or accept any personal enrichment or profit derived from confidential information or misuse of public time.

Employer shall support Employee in keeping these commitments by refraining from any order, direction or request that would require Employee to violate the ICMA Code of Ethics. Specifically, neither the governing body nor any individual member thereof shall request Employee to endorse any candidate, make any financial contribution, sign or circulate any petition, or participate in any fund-raising activity for individuals seeking or holding elected office, nor to handle any matter of personnel on a basis other than fairness, impartiality and merit.

Section 15: Outside Activities

The employment provided for by this Agreement shall be the Employee's primary employment. Recognizing that certain outside consulting or teaching opportunities provide indirect benefits to the Employer and the community, the Employee may elect to accept limited teaching, consulting or other business opportunities with the understanding that such arrangements must neither constitute interference with nor a conflict of interest with his or her responsibilities under this Agreement.

Section 16: Moving and Relocation Expenses

Recommended Language

Employee agrees to establish residence within the corporate boundaries of the local government, if required, within [number] months of employment, and thereafter to maintain residence within the corporate boundaries of the local government.

A. Employer shall pay directly for the expenses of moving Employee and his/her family and personal property from [location name] to [location name]. Said moving expenses include packing, moving, storage costs, unpacking, and insurance charges. The Employee shall provide evidence of actual moving expenses by securing quotations from three (3) companies. The Employee shall submit these quotes to the Employer who, in consultation with the Employee, shall select the moving company.

B. Employer shall reimburse Employee for actual lodging and meal expenses for his/her family in route from [location name] to [location name]. Mileage costs for moving two personal automobiles shall be reimbursed at the current IRS allowable rate of [cents amount] per mile.

C. Employer shall pay Employee an interim housing supplement of [dollar amount] per month for a period commencing [date], and shall continue for a maximum of [#] months, or until a home is purchased and closed on, within the corporate limits of the [local government name], whichever event occurs first.

D. Employer shall reimburse Employee for a total of [number] round trip air fares for Employee and his/her family [amount of total tickets] at any time during the first year of service to assist with house hunting and other facets of the transition and relocation process. The

Employee and his/her family may utilize and distribute the total [enter number] individual round trip tickets in any combination of individual members making the trips. The Employee shall be reimbursed for actual lodging and meal expenses incurred by Employee or his/her family members on any trips conducted prior to relocation, as detailed herein.

E. The Employee shall be reimbursed, or Employer may pay directly, for the expenses of packing and moving from temporary housing to permanent hous-ing during the first year of this agreement. The cost of this move shall not exceed (dollar amount).

F. The Employer shall pay the Employee's tax liability on all Employer provided benefits for relocation and housing.

Option 1

The Employer shall pay a lump sum payment of [$] to the Employee to cover relocation costs.

Section 17: Home Sale and Purchase Expenses

Recommended Language

A. Employee shall be reimbursed for the direct costs associated with the sale of Employee's existing personal residence, said reimbursement being limited to real estate agents' fees, and other closing costs that are directly associated with the sale of the house. Said reimbursement should not exceed the sum of [$].

B. Employee shall be reimbursed for the costs incidental to buying or building a primary residence within the [local government], including real estate fees, title insurance, and other costs directly associated with the purchase or construction of the house, said reimbursement not to exceed the sum of [$].

Option 1

Employer shall reimburse Employee for up to three discount points within thirty (30) days following purchase of a home within the corporate limits of [local government name], in an effort to minimize mortgage rate differentials.

Option 2

Employer shall provide Employee with a [fixed-interest, variable-interest, interest-only] loan to purchase a house. The amount of the loan shall not exceed $_____. The loan shall be repaid in full to the Employer upon the occurrence of either of the following events: (i) the home, or the Employee's interest in the home, is sold, transferred, or conveyed, or (ii) the Employee's employment with the Employer, for any reason, is terminated. The Employer and Employee shall execute any and all documents necessary to document this transaction.

Option 3

Employer agrees to provide the Employee a loan for the purchase of a home in an amount not to exceed [dollar amount]. Employee shall pay Employer a monthly mortgage payment of [dollar amount] for interest, which is equal to the amount currently being paid in principle and interest for the current residence. Employee shall accrue equity at a rate of [%] per month.

Upon termination of employment with the Employer, Employee shall have a maximum of six months to sell the home while continuing to reside in it under the terms and conditions here. Should the home sell during the time period, Employer shall receive 100% of the proceeds minus the percentage of equity accrued by Employee as described above, and minus the amount of equity originally invested by Employee. Said accrued equity and original equity shall both be payable to Employee upon closing. Said original equity invested shall be calculated as an amount equal to the percentage of original purchase price, represented by the original equity investment by Employee, and adjusted to be the same percentage of equity in the current sale price of the home. All closing costs borne by the seller shall be split between Employer and Employee in a proportion equal to the equity share described above. Should the house fail to sell within the allotted six month time period, Employer has the option of allowing the previous arrangement to continue in place or to purchase equity, calculated as provided above, plus the original cost of all improvements made to the property.

Option 4

A. Employer shall provide a residence for Employee at no cost to Employee other than the monthly cost of all utilities and services. Should Employee choose to not accept the housing no additional housing incentive shall be provided to Employee.

B. Upon separation, voluntary or involuntary, Employee shall vacate the residence with six (6) months of date of separation.

Option 5

Employee shall place their current residence on the market and make every reasonable attempt to sell residence. If after six (6) months, Employee has not sold or agreed to sell their residence the Employer shall purchase the residence from Employee at ninety percent (90%) of current list price or appraised value whichever is less. Employer shall then place the residence on the market with all proceeds of any sale to Employer.

Section 18: Indemnification

Beyond that required under Federal, State or Local Law, Employer shall defend, save harmless and indemnify Employee against any obligation to pay money or perform or no perform action, including without limitation, any and all losses, damages, judgments, interests, settlements, penalties, fines, court costs and other reasonable costs and expenses of legal proceedings including attorneys fees, and any other liabilities arising from, related to, or connected with any tort, professional liability claim or demand or any other threatened, pending or completed action, suit or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, arbitrative or investigation, whether groundless or otherwise, arising out of an alleged act or omission occurring in the performance of Employee's duties as [job title] or resulting from the exercise of judgment or discretion in connection with the performance of program duties or responsibilities, unless the act or omission involved willful or wanton conduct. The Employee may request and the Employer shall not unreasonably refuse to provide independent legal representation at Employer's expense and Employer may not unreasonably withhold approval. Legal representation, provided by Employer for Employee, shall extend until a final determination of the legal action including any appeals brought by either party. The Employer shall indemnify Employee against any and all losses,

damages, judgments, interest, settlements, penalties, fines, court costs and other reasonable costs and expenses of legal proceedings including attorneys fees, and any other liabilities incurred by, imposed upon, or suffered by such Employee in connection with or resulting from any claim, action, suit, or proceeding, actual or threatened, arising out of or in connection with the performance of his or her duties. Any settlement of any claim must be made with prior approval of the Employer in order for indemnification, as provided in this Section, to be available.

Employee recognizes that Employer shall have the right to compromise and unless the Employee is a party to the suit which Employee shall have a veto authority over the settlement, settle any claim or suit; unless, said compromise or settlement is of a personal nature to Employee. Further, Employer agrees to pay all reasonable litigation expenses of Employee throughout the pendency of any litigation to which the Employee is a party, witness or advisor to the Employer. Such expense payments shall continue beyond Employee's service to the Employer as long as litigation is pending. Further, Employer agrees to pay Employee reasonable consulting fees and travel expenses when Employee serves as a witness, advisor or consultant to Employer regarding pending litigation.

Section 19: Bonding

Employer shall bear the full cost of any fidelity or other bonds required of the Employee under any law or ordinance.

Section 20: Other Terms and Conditions of Employment

A. The Employer, only upon agreement with Employee, shall fix any such other terms and condi- tions of employment, as it may determine from time to time, relating to the performance of the Employee, pro- vided such terms and conditions are not inconsistent with or in conflict with the provisions of this Agree- ment, the [local government] Charter, local ordinances or any other law.

B. Except as otherwise provided in this Agreement, the Employee shall be entitled, at a minimum, to the highest level of benefits that are enjoyed by or offered to other [appointed officials, appointed employees, department heads or general employees] of the Employer as provided in the Charter, Code, Personnel Rules and Regulations or by practice.

Option 1—Appropriation

The Employer has appropriated, set aside and encum- bered, and does hereby appropriate, set aside, and encumber, available and unappropriated funds of the municipality in an amount sufficient to fund and pay all financial obligations of the Employer pursuant to this Agreement, including but not limited to, the Sev- erance and other benefits set forth in Section 10.

Section 21: Notices

Notice pursuant to this Agreement shall be given by depositing in the custody of the United States Postal Service, postage prepaid, and addressed as follows:

Notice shall be deemed given as of the date of per- sonal service or as the date of deposit of such writ- ten notice in the course of transmission in the United States Postal Service.

(a)	EMPLOYER:	City of ( )
		address
		city,state,zip
(b)	EMPLOYEE:	name
		address
		city, state zip

Section 22: General Provisions

A. **Integration.** This Agreement sets forth and establishes the entire understanding between the Employer and the Employee relating to the employment of the Employee by the Employer. Any prior discussions or representations by or between the Employer and Employee are merged into and rendered null and void by this Agreement. The Employer and Employee by mutual written agreement may amend any provision of this agreement during the life of the agreement. Such amendments shall be incorporated and made a part of this agreement.

B. **Binding Effect.** This Agreement shall be binding on the Employer and the Employee as well as their heirs, assigns, executors, personal representatives and successors in interest.

C. **Effective Date.** This Agreement shall become effective on _____, _____.

D. **Severability.** The invalidity or partial invalidity of any portion of this Agreement will not affect the validity of any other provision. In the event that any provision of this Agreement is held to be invalid, the remaining provisions shall be deemed to be in full force and effect as if they have been executed by both Employer and Employee subsequent to the expungement or judicial modification of the invalid provision.

E. **Precedence.** In the event of any conflict between the terms, conditions and provisions of this Agreement and the provisions of Council's policies, or Employer's ordinance or Employer's rules and regulations, or any permissive state or federal law, then, unless otherwise prohibited by law, the terms of this Agreement shall take precedence over contrary provisions of Council's policies, or Employer's ordinances, or Employer's rules and regulations or any such permissive law during the term of this Agreement.

Name of Employer

By: _____

Governing Body Representative

Executed this the (number) day of (month), (year).

Employee

Signature: _____

Executed this the (number) day of (month),(year).

Appendix 1

SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT AND GENERAL RELEASE

This Separation of Employment and General Release Agreement ("Agreement") is made by and between the [local government] ("Employer") and _____("Employee").

WHEREAS, Employer has employed Employee as its _____; however, the parties wish to enter into a voluntary agreement to terminate their employment relationship and to resolve any actual or potential claims that either party may have against the other by reason of Employee's employment or termination thereof.

WHEREAS, The parties desire to set forth the terms and conditions governing Employee's separation of employment and to provide for the settlement and release of any and all disputes or controversies that have arisen, or which may hereafter arise, between Employer and Employee, including without limitation, any and all claims arising out of or in any way related to Employee's employment with or separation from the Employer.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants herein contained and the mutual benefits to be derived therefrom, the sufficiency of which consideration is hereby acknowledged by the undersigned, Employer and Employee agree and state:

1. **TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT.** Upon their mutual agreement, Employee's employment _____shall terminate on _____, 20__, which shall be Employee's final date of employment.

2. **NO ADMISSION OF LIABILITY.** This Agreement is not an admission by Employee or Employer of any wrongful conduct whatsoever. Both parties deny and disclaim any liability to or wrongful conduct against the other or any third party.

3. **PAYMENT AND BENEFITS.** Employee shall receive his/her regular paycheck for the pay period ending _____, 20__ on or before _____, 20__. Employee shall receive on or before _____, 20__ an additional payment to compensate for his accumulated leaves (vacation and floating holidays) and comp time, subject to customary payroll deductions.

As consideration for this Agreement and the release contained within, and in full and complete satisfaction of all obligations due and owing Employee, Employer shall:

a. Pay Employee an amount equal to _____(__) months of his current salary, subject to customary payroll deductions—to include Employee's portion of health, dental and vision insurance premiums for _____(__) months.

b. Continue, and pay for, Employer's current health, dental and vision insurance coverages for _____(__) months, ending on _____, 20__.

[C. INCLUDE ANY OTHER CONSIDERATION, SUCH AS AGREEING NOT TO CONTEST UNEMPLOYMENT, ALLOWING THE EMPLOYEE TO PURCHASE HIS WORK LAPTOP, ETC.]

3. **SURRENDER AND VACATION OF EMPLOYER's PROPERTY.** Upon execution of this Agreement, Employee shall deliver all Employer's property in his/her possession and further, shall vacate Employer's property.

4. **RELEASE AND WAIVER OF CLAIMS.** In consideration of the benefits to be provided to Employee pursuant to this Agreement, Employee—including his heirs and assigns—hereby irrevocably and unconditionally releases, acquits and discharges Employer and each of its past, present and future elected officials, department heads, officers, employees, agents, representatives and attorneys from any and all charges, complaints, claims, liabilities, obligations, promises, agreements, controversies, damages, actions, causes of action, suits, rights, demands, costs, losses, debts and expenses (including attorneys' fees and costs actually incurred), of any nature whatsoever, whether known or unknown, arising out of any act, omission, or event from the beginning of time up to the execution of this Agreement. Employee specifically acknowledges and agrees that he is releasing and giving up any right that he may now have under federal or state law or political subdivision thereof and any claims that he may now have or could have asserted against Employer.

Employee specifically agrees to release all claims that against Employer under many different laws, including but not limited to: *the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Older Workers Benefit Protection Act, and Executive Order 11141, which prohibit age discrimination in employment;* Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 1981 of the Civil Rights Act

of 1866, and Executive Order 11246, which prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, or sex; the Americans with Disabilities Act and Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibit discrimination based on disability; any other federal, state, or local laws prohibiting employment or wage discrimination; the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and state laws that regulate wage and hour matters; the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993; the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974; any federal, state, or local laws providing workers' compensation benefits, prohibiting retaliatory or wrongful discharge, otherwise restricting an employer's right to terminate employees, or otherwise regulating employment; claims for breach of contract, promissory estoppel, defamation, slander, or libel; claims for termination pay, severance, or other benefits; and any other federal, state, or local tort or contract claim. Employee expressly waives all rights that he might have under any law that is intended to protect him from waiving unknown claims.

Employer hereby irrevocably and unconditionally releases, acquits and discharges Employee from any and all from any and all charges, complaints, claims, liabilities, obligations, promises, agreements, controversies, damages, actions, causes of action, suits, rights, demands, costs, losses, debts and expenses (including attorneys' fees and costs actually incurred), of any nature whatsoever, whether known or unknown, arising out of any act, omission, or event from the beginning of time up to the execution of this Agreement.

5. **REFERENCES AND NON-DISPARAGEMENT.** If it is necessary for Employer to provide a reference to a prospective employer, Employee agrees that he will direct the prospective employer to contact _____. Additionally, Employee and the elected officials agree that they shall not disparage or make negative comments about each other; provided that this Section shall not apply to comments made to any other governmental entity or as required by law.

6. **REPRESENTATIONS AND WARRANTIES.** The undersigned parties hereby represent and warrant the following to the other:

a. Employee represents and warrants that: he/she is legally and mentally competent to sign this Agreement; he/she is the sole owner of any claims against the Employer; he/she has the requisite capacity and authority to make this Agreement, and no portion of any existing or potential claims has

been sold, assigned or pledged to any third party; and he/she presently possesses the exclusive right to receive all of the consideration paid in exchange for this Agreement.

b. Employee represents and warrants that he/she has not and will not file any complaints, charges or lawsuits against Employer or any of its past, present and future elected officials, department heads, officers, employees, agents, representatives or attorneys with any governmental agency or any court, including without limitation, any claim or matter of any nature whatsoever related to or arising out of his employment with or separation of his/her employment, except Employee expressly reserves the right to file a claim for unemployment benefits. Employee further agrees to indemnify and hold Employer harmless from any and all loss, costs, damages or expenses, including reasonable attorney fees incurred by Employer, arising out of any claim concerning the separation of employment that may hereafter be made by the Employee or any other party.

c. Employer represents and warrants that it has not and will not file any complaints, charges or lawsuits against Employee with any governmental agency or any court, including without limitation, any claim or matter of any nature whatsoever relating to or arising out of Employee's employment with Employer or the separation of his employment from Employer. Employer further agrees to indemnify and hold the Employee harmless from any and all loss, costs, damages or expenses, including reasonable attorney fees incurred by Employee, arising out of any claim arising from the separation of his employment that may hereafter be made by Employer or any other party.

d. Each party is fully aware of the contents of this Agreement and of its legal effect and understands that it should obtain legal advice regarding this Agreement as they deem appropriate. The parties hereto and each of them, have carefully read this Agreement and know the contents thereof, and they signed the same freely and voluntarily.

e. This Agreement sets forth the entire agreement between the parties and supersedes any and all prior agreements or understandings between the parties pertaining to the subject matter herein. No waiver of a breach of any provision of this Agreement shall be construed to be a waiver of any breach of any other provision of this Agreement or

of any succeeding breach of the same provision. No delay in acting with regard to any breach of any provision of this Agreement shall be construed to be a waiver of such breach. If any provision in this Agreement is found to be unenforceable, all other provisions will remain fully enforceable.

f. No promise or inducement has been made or offered, except as herein expressly set forth, and this Agreement is executed without reliance upon any statement or representation by any of the released parties or their representatives.

g. The language of all parts of this Agreement shall, in all cases, be construed as a whole, according to its fair meaning, and not strictly for or against either party.

h. This Agreement and any amendments hereto may be executed in multiple counterparts by the parties. Each counterpart shall be deemed an original, but all counterparts together shall constitute one and the same instrument

7. **JURISDICTION.** This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of _____, and the _____ County District Court shall have exclusive jurisdiction of any disputes arising under this Agreement.

8. **BINDING EFFECT.** This Agreement shall be binding upon and shall accrue to the benefit of the parties hereto, their respective personal representatives, successors in interest and assigns.

9. *REVIEW & REVOCATION.* **The parties acknowledge that Employee may revoke his/her acceptance and execution of this Agreement at any time within seven (7) days of the date of his/her execution of it. Any revocation shall be in writing and shall be effective upon timely receipt by the Employer's Attorney.**

If the revocation is submitted by mail, the revocation must be postmarked before the expiration of the seven (7)-day revocation period, and must be sent by overnight mail or other method so that it is received at the above address no later than the next business day immediately following the expiration of the seven (7)-day period. Further, Employee represents that, before accepting and executing this Agreement, he/she was given a review period of twenty-one (21) days in which to consider it. Employee further represents that he/she: (a) took advantage of as much of this period as required to consider this Agreement before signing it; (b)

carefully read the Agreement and the Release included herein; (c) fully understands it; and (d) is entering into it voluntarily. Employee represents that Employer encouraged him/her to discuss this Agreement with an attorney of choice before signing it. This Agreement shall not become effective or enforceable until the seven-day revocation period has expired without Employee having revoked acceptance of it.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this Agreement as of the respective dates set forth below and each hereby acknowledge receipt of an executed copy of this Agreement.

On behalf of the Employer of

_____, _____:

_____
Employer

_____
Date

Attested by:

_____
Employer's Representative

_____
Date

On behalf of Employee:

_____

_____
Date

Evaluating your Professional Manager

ICMA Manager Evaluations Handbook

Life, Well Run

Manager Evaluations
HANDBOOK

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

ICMA advances professional local government worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing professional management of local government. ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, provides member support; publications, data, and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to more than 9,000 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world. The management decisions made by ICMA's members affect 185 million individuals living in thousands of communities, from small villages and towns to large metropolitan areas.

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Contents

Definition of Terms

- The term *local government*, as used in this handbook, refers to a town, village, borough, township, city, county, or a legally constituted elected body of governments.
- The term *manager* refers to the chief executive officer (CEO) or chief administrative officer (CAO) of any local government who has been appointed by its elected body to oversee day-to-day operations.
- The terms *elected officials, elected body*, and *board* refer to any council, commission, or other locally elected body, including assemblies, boards of trustees, boards of selectmen, boards of supervisors, boards of directors, and so on.
- The term *manager evaluation* refers to the appraisal or assessment conducted by the elected body of the manager's performance in achieving organizational goals and implementing policy.

Members of the Task Force on Manager Evaluations

Preface

The evaluation of the manager is a key component of any well-run local government, yet the value of a quality evaluation process and the responsibility for that activity is often overlooked. Even in communities that are considered to be professionally governed, the performance evaluation of the local government manager can be an afterthought. The 2012–2013 Executive Board of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), led by President Bonnie Svrcek, acknowledged the need for local government managers and their elected bodies to put more focus on the manager evaluation process.

Accordingly, it created a task force of managers from around the United States, representing over a dozen communities, to develop a *Manager Evaluations Handbook* that would assist managers and their boards in this critical task.

Managers are encouraged to review this handbook with an eye toward working with their elected bodies to develop formal, mutually agreed-upon processes for their own evaluations. This handbook, however, is also intended to highlight the value of a formal manager evaluation process and to assist local elected officials in the design of an effective evaluation tool.

Executive Summary

The periodic evaluation of the local government manager by the elected body is an important component of a high-performance organization. The evaluation should contain performance goals, objectives, and targets that are linked to the elected body's established strategic plans, goals, and priorities, and it should focus on the manager's degree of progress toward organizational outcomes. To be fair, it must be based on criteria that have been communicated to the manager in advance. Sample or generic evaluation forms, if used, should be customized to reflect these criteria.

The purpose of the evaluation process is to increase communication between the members of the elected body and the manager concerning the manager's performance in the accomplishment of assigned duties and responsibilities, and the establishment of specific work-related goals and objectives for the coming year. Thus, all members of the elected body should participate in the process, both by individually completing the rating instrument and by discussing their ratings with the other board members in order to arrive at a consensus about performance expectations.

There is no one correct way to conduct a manager evaluation. The key is to ensure that the evaluation takes place in a regular, mutually agreed-upon manner and is viewed by all as an opportunity for communication between the elected officials and the manager.

It may be useful, particularly if the members of the elected body are inexperienced in the performance evaluation process, to use a consultant to help the elected body prepare for and conduct the manager's evaluation.

Successful Evaluation Tips[1]

Performance evaluations will allow you to

A. Recognize the accomplishments of the manager and show appreciation for the unique contributions to the organization
B. Clearly identify areas where the manager is doing well
C. Clearly identify areas where the manager can improve his or her performance
D. Specify definite actions that will allow the manager to make additional value-added contributions to the organization in the future.
E. Obtain the manager's own opinions on progress and his or her individual contribution to collective actions and achievements.

Discussing tasks that the manager performs well

- Gives the manager insight into self-awareness, interests, and motivation
- Gives the manager recognition and appreciation for achievements
- Creates a positive climate for the remainder of the review.

Reminders:

- Listen intently.
- Reinforce the manager's performance.
- Emphasize facts; provide concrete examples and specific descriptions of actions, work, and results.
- Give only positive feedback during this part of the evaluation.
- Acknowledge improvements that the manager has made.
- Praise efforts if the manager has worked hard on something but failed because of circumstances beyond his or her control.
- Describe performance that you would like to see continued.

Discussing areas that need improvement

- Gives insight into how the manager feels about change, improvement for growth
- Allows you to express any concerns you have about the manager's overall performance and performance in specific areas
- Lets you challenge the manager to higher levels of achievement.

Reminders:

- Keep the discussion focused on performance.
- Describe actions and results that do not meet expectations.
- Describe areas where the manager can make a greater contribution.
- Describe any situation or performance observed that needs to be changed; be specific.
- Tell the manager what needs to be done if a specific change of behavior needs to take place.
- Focus on learning from the past and making plans for the future.
- Keep this part of the discussion as positive and encouraging as possible.

Do's and Don'ts

DO:

- Spend a few minutes warming up in which the agenda is laid out so everyone is reminded about what to expect. Give an overview.
- Always start with the positives. Be specific.
- Explain the ratings in all areas: Talk about how the consensus was arrived.
- Be honest. Tell it like it is.
- Be a coach, not a judge. Managing employees is a lot like being an athletic coach. Effective coaching involves a lot more than just score keeping. Simply providing the score at the end of the game doesn't improve performance.
- Discuss with the manager his or her reactions to the ratings, making clear that you are interested in his or her feelings and thoughts.
- If appropriate, develop an improvement plan that includes areas of deficiency, developmental needs.

DON'T:

- Rate the manager without the facts. Ratings should be on actual results.
- Be too general.
- Sidestep problems. Document performance problems and clearly identify what needs improvement.
- Be vague or generalize the reasons for the performance scores. Clear and specific examples of results should be available.
- Ambush the manager by identifying deficiencies or problems that have never been addressed in informal discussions prior to the formal evaluation.
- Minimize the manager's concerns or discount his or her feelings.

Introduction

There is some irony in the fact that managers' evaluations are often less formal and less structured than those of the managers' employees. While the manager may oversee the evaluation of hundreds of employees within an organization, his or her own performance evaluation becomes the task of elected leaders who are often not formally trained in the evaluation process or who have narrow or conflicting definitions of good performance. The fact that an elected body with numerous members is charged with the task of evaluating the manager makes the need for a clear and agreed-upon evaluation process even more important. And a thoughtful and structured evaluation process that is supported by all involved parties enhances the ongoing communication that is fundamental to effective board/manager relationships.

A manager's evaluation should contain performance goals, objectives, and targets that are linked to the elected body's established strategic plans, goals, and priorities and should focus on whether the manager has achieved the desired organizational outcomes.

Sometimes the tone of a performance review can be unduly influenced by the manager's last success or failure. Judging performance on the basis of a single incident or behavior is a common problem that can arise in any organization. But a single incident or behavior should not be the sole focus of a performance evaluation. That is not to discount the importance of how a manager handles high-stress, higher-profile issues, which is an important aspect of a manager's responsibility. However, day-to-day leadership, which is also a key responsibility of the manager, can sometimes go unnoticed even though it provides the foundation in which high-stress, high-profile issues are handled.

ICMA has developed a list of 14 Practices for Effective Local Government Leadership that is recommended to members who are considering their own professional development needs and activities. The core areas represent much of what local government managers are responsible for on an everyday basis, and competency by the manager in these practices is central to an effective, high-performing, professionally managed local government. It is therefore the recommendation of ICMA's Task Force on Manager Evaluations that competency in the ICMA Practices also be considered in the manager's performance evaluation.

There is no one way, let alone one single correct way, to conduct an effective manager evaluation. This *Manager Evaluations Handbook* will present traditional evaluation approaches that have proven to be successful, along with some alternative methods that may be good for your local government. Again, the key is to ensure that the evaluation takes place in a regular, mutually agreed-upon manner and is viewed by all as an opportunity for communication between the elected officials and the manager.

The Purpose of Manager Evaluations

High-performance local governments embrace an ethos of continual improvement. Conducting regular appraisals of the manager's work performance is part of the continual improvement process.

The purpose of the evaluation process is to increase communication between the members of the elected body and the manager concerning the manager's performance in the accomplishment of his or her assigned duties and responsibilities and the establishment of specific work-related goals, objectives, and performance measures for the coming year. The evaluation process provides an opportunity for the elected body to have an honest dialogue with the manager about its expectations, to assess what is being accomplished, to recognize the manager's achievements and contributions, to identify where there may be performance gaps, to develop standards to measure future performance, and to identify the resources and actions necessary to achieve the agreed-upon standards. Keeping the focus on "big picture" strategic goals and behaviors rather than on minor issues or one-time mistakes/complaints leads to better outcomes.

Given that good relationships promote candor and constructive planning, the performance appraisal also provides a forum for both parties to discuss and strengthen the elected body–manager relationship, ensuring better alignment of goals while reducing misunderstandings and surprises. When elected bodies conduct regular performance appraisals of the manager, they are more likely to achieve their community's goals and objectives.

Basic Process

Ideally, the performance appraisal process for a manager is the natural continuation of the hiring process.

How to Initiate

Prior to the recruitment of candidates, the elected body typically develops the goals and objectives for

the position of manager. Then, during the selection process, the candidate and the hiring body meet to discuss these items along with the long- and short-term needs and issues of the community. Through these conversations, the basic tenets of the manager's performance evaluation are identified. At this point, the performance appraisal process just needs to be formalized. When the employment offer has been accepted, the employment agreement should include the requirement and schedule for the manager's evaluation.

(Excellent tools for preparing the employment agreement are contained in the ICMA Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator and the ICMA Model Employment Agreement.)

The employment agreement should stipulate that the performance evaluation will be a written document and that all parties will meet to discuss the contents in person. It should also identify the frequency with which evaluations will take place (e.g., annually, semi-annually). By including this information in the employment agreement, the hiring body ensures that communications between the manager and the elected body will be consistently scheduled, and that initiatives and objectives can be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

It is especially critical for the elected body to come to consensus on the initial expectations of the newly hired manager so that priorities can be assigned and progress measured. Those issues that were important during the hiring process will logically factor into the initial evaluation process. Then, in the succeeding years, the document can be revised to reflect the latest accomplishments and newest challenges.

Of course, priorities may shift during the year. If that happens, make it clear to the manager that new or changed priorities are being added into the evaluation process.

If, with the passage of time, elections have taken place and the board that is conducting the evaluation is not the same board that did the hiring, it is important that the newly elected officials immediately be introduced to the established performance goals, measures, and evaluation process. This can be done as part of the orientation process for new board members, included in the discussion of the form of government and the role of the manager. If a new member has no experience in conducting performance evaluations, he or she will need to receive training before participating in this process.

If performance evaluations were not discussed during the hiring process, either the manager or the elected body may request that an evaluation process be instituted, and the specifics for conducting the evaluation can then be agreed upon outside of the provisions of the employment agreement. If the request is made by the elected body, it is important to emphasize that the purpose of the evaluation process is to serve as a tool for organizational improvement, not as a means of punishing the manager or setting the stage for termination. While elected officials, especially those newly elected, may sometimes wish for a change in management, the performance evaluation process should not be used to effect such a change.

How to Proceed

A number of issues should be considered when preparing for the evaluation process, including how to develop the rating instrument (and whether to use an outside consultant), how to use the rating instrument, and whether the evaluation should be conducted in private or in public.

Developing the Rating Instrument

Unlike most employee performance evaluations, in which the employee is evaluated by a single executive or supervisor, the manager's evaluation is conducted by a group of individuals acting as a body. As each elected official likely has different expectations, the board members must first come to a consensus on measures and definitions to be used.

Using a consultant. If the members of the elected body are inexperienced in the performance evaluation process, it might be helpful at this point to use an independent consultant to assist in preparing for and conducting the manager's evaluation. A consultant could be used in a variety of ways.

When designing the evaluation instrument, a consultant should solicit each elected official's full participation by asking for examples and details for each rating category. Whether this is accomplished by interviewing each official individually or by facilitating a group session, it is important to ensure that all voices are heard. Use of an independent consultant is especially helpful if there is a lack of cohesion among elected officials.

Once the consultant has collected the information, the elected body and manager should meet in person to discuss the findings. It is recommended that the in-person conversation with the manager to review the evaluation be conducted by the elected body with the assistance of the consultant but not by the consultant alone.

If funds are limited, a consultant could be used in a limited engagement to prepare an evaluation system and then train the elected officials on how to conduct an evaluation, which the officials may manage themselves after the first year.

If the elected body decides to use a consultant, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) may be a source of referrals, as may be state municipal leagues or the local government's regular employment consulting firms. If a recruiter was used to assist with the hiring process, the recruiter's agreement could be extended to include the setup of the initial evaluation process.

It is recommended that the evaluation process NOT be facilitated by the local government's corporation counsel, municipal clerk, or human resources director because these individuals are not independent parties. In almost all cases, their positions have either a reporting or a cooperating relationship with the manager, so involving them in the manager's evaluation may damage relationships that are necessary for the effective and efficient operation of the local government

Proceeding without a consultant. If a consultant is not used to facilitate the development of the evaluation instrument, the elected body may wish to begin by reviewing the format and process used for the other local government employees and considering the same or a revised method. It is important to understand, however, that a manager is evaluated in additional ways. Because of this key difference, flexibility is needed to add any necessary components intended to assess varied goals and objectives and to facilitate a dialogue between the elected body and the manager.

To be fair, the evaluation must be outcome based, using criteria that have been previously communicated to the manager and that incorporate the elected body's priorities. The use of a prefabricated generic evaluation form (even the sample forms found at the end of this handbook) is not recommended without some customization to reflect these priorities.

Measure observable behaviors and progress toward goals

The manager's job is to achieve the organization's goals and implement the policies that have been determined by the elected body. Evaluating the manager's effectiveness in achieving the goals necessarily means that the elected body must have determined and communicated the goals to the manager in advance,

The manager's success in achieving the goals set by the elected body is related to his or her competencies and behaviors with respect to the specific functions identified as the responsibility of the manager. Defining the strengths of the manager and identifying areas for improvement are part of the evaluation process. ICMA has a list of 14 core areas critical for effective local government management and leadership. While this list, the ICMA Practices for Effective Local Government Leadership, was developed for the purpose of ICMA's Voluntary Credentialing professional development program, the elected body might find it helpful for identifying the specific observable behaviors to be used in the manager evaluation. It is suggested that the elected body select what it believes to be the most important areas for achieving its goals and evaluate the manager's performance in these areas. The ICMA Practices are as follows (click here for descriptions):

1. Personal and Professional Integrity
2. Community Engagement
3. Equity and Inclusion
4. Staff Effectiveness
5. Personal Resiliency and Development
6. Strategic Leadership
7. Strategic Planning
8. Policy Facilitation and Implementation
9. Community and Resident Service
10. Service Delivery
11. Technological Literacy
12. Financial Management and Budgeting
13. Human Resources Management and Workforce Engagement
14. Communication and Information Sharing

ideally through a strategic planning process.

The members of the board must be in agreement about their expectations of the manager. Furthermore, both the manager and the board must understand what the expectations are.

The performance criteria established by the board for each of the prioritized functional areas need to be

specific and observable by the members of the elected body. If the criteria are quantifiable, they should be expressed in objective, measurable terms. For example, the manager saved 10% on the new project. If the criteria are qualitative and subjective, they can be expressed in terms of the desired outcome. For example, members of the community and employees frequently commented on the manager's fairness during this evaluation period.

Using the Rating Instrument

The usefulness of any performance evaluation depends almost entirely upon the understanding, impartiality, and objectivity with which the ratings are made. In order to obtain a clear, fair, and accurate rating, an evaluator must clearly differentiate between the personality and performance of the manager being rated, making an objective and unbiased assessment on the basis of performance alone. Fairness requires the ability to identify both the strengths and weaknesses of the manager's performance and to explain these constructively to the manager.

When an evaluation is completed by a group of people, it is important that it reflect the consensus opinion of all members. All members of the elected body should participate in the manager evaluation process in order to arrive at a consensus. This consensus can be accomplished by having each member individually rate the manager, followed by a group discussion to arrive at a final consensus rating for each measure. Alternatively, if consensus cannot be reached, each member can individually complete the rating form, and then one member (or the consultant, if one is used) can collect the forms and compile the results and comments into one document, followed by group discussion. It is important that each member's ratings, whether positive or negative, be backed up with specific comments and examples so that the whole group understands the reasoning behind them.

If individual comments—those that do not necessarily represent the sentiments of the elected body as a whole—are to be included in the final document that will be discussed with the manager, the board should decide in advance whether those comments will be anonymous or attributed to the individuals making them.

It is important to keep in mind that performance evaluation is just one part of the communication toolbox between the manager and elected officials. It is intended to enhance that communication, not to result in a periodic written "report card" that is an end in

itself. In addition, nothing in the evaluation ought ever to be a surprise. Ongoing conversations should be held throughout the year (assuming that the evaluation is done annually) to help the manager understand if he or she is on course or if any midseason corrections are necessary. Ideally, the items in the evaluation will have already been touched on in these conversations, so the evaluation will serve as a written summary of them.

Public versus private evaluations

When deciding whether to conduct the evaluation process in a public or an executive/closed session, the elected officials, manager, and legal counsel should review state law. When possible, it is recommended that the performance evaluation process occur in executive/closed session between the elected body and manager; however, many states have specific regulations about whether and when the public may be excluded from attending a meeting involving the elected body or from having access to certain records involving a public employee. Such "sunshine" laws were first created to increase public disclosure by governmental agencies. The purpose is to promote accountability and transparency by allowing the public to see how decisions are made and how money is allocated.

While all states have such laws, the exact provisions of those laws vary. For example, specific legislation may require that all government meetings be open to the public or that written records be released upon request. In many states, all local government records are available for review by the public, including evaluation documents and notes, unless they are specifically exempted or prohibited from disclosure by state statutes.

Regardless of whether the evaluation is conducted in a public or an executive/closed session, each state's statute will dictate certain procedures for meeting notification, recording of minutes, and disclosure of decisions made. These procedures should be reviewed by the elected officials, manager, and legal counsel and followed throughout the evaluation process.

However, all final decisions or actions related to the manager's performance (e.g., employment agreement changes, compensation) should be made in a public setting.

Frequency and Timing of Manager Evaluations

As previously noted, the manager evaluation process, including the frequency and timing of the evaluations,

will ideally have been discussed as part of the employment agreement at the time of the manager's hiring. It is recommended that the initial formal evaluation not

take place until the elected officials and the manager have worked together for a year; however, short, less formal evaluations are recommended on a quarterly basis. After that, at least one formal evaluation (still with quarterly informal evaluations) should be conducted per year, as longer intervals create a higher likelihood of miscommunication and surprises.

It is further recommended that the formal evaluation be scheduled during the least busy time of year for both the manager and the elected officials, avoiding both the budget preparation season (particularly if the manager's compensation is tied to the evaluation) and the election season (lest the manager's evaluation become an election issue). The scheduling should also allow adequate time for newly elected members of the board to become familiar with the manager's performance.

Relationship of Evaluation to Compensation

The primary purposes of a manager's performance evaluation are

1. To provide a tool for communication between the elected body and the manager
2. To provide an opportunity for the elected body to specifically indicate levels of satisfaction with the manager on mutually identified and defined performance priorities
3. To provide an opportunity for the manager to learn and improve
4. To allow for fair and equitable compensation adjustments based on a review of performance in achieving mutually identified priorities and on the elected body's level of satisfaction with the manager's overall performance.

Performance evaluations that are tied directly to compensation decisions are often distorted by those decisions and therefore result in less-than-honest communication between the elected body and the manager. This happens primarily because

1. Elected officials wishing to offer upward compensation adjustments may feel obliged to embellish the evaluation in a positive manner to justify the compensation decision to the public.
2. Elected officials not wishing to adjust compensation may feel obligated to justify their decision with negative comments about performance matters that actually are not a major concern to them.
3. The manager may be reluctant to seek full clarification on issues raised in the evaluation for fear it could result in a reconsideration of the compensa-

tion decision.

To avoid these distortions in communication, a balanced evaluation is necessary. That is, the evaluation should provide the opportunity for open communication and at the same time be used for compensation decisions related to identified performance achievement and corrective actions by the manager. To this end, a balanced evaluation would

1. Establish a clear set of performance expectations prior to the evaluation period.

2. Include a midterm evaluation without any consideration of compensation in order to focus on clarity of communication and performance to date. This evaluation would allow the manager to take steps to address areas of performance that were of concern to the elected body; it would also help to eliminate misunderstandings and miscommunication between the elected body and manager.

3. Use a full-term evaluation to evaluate the level of performance satisfaction for the entire performance period and thus provide the basis for a fair and equitable compensation decision.

Often, factors other than the performance evaluation form the basis of compensation decisions. These nonperformance considerations include

1. The economic climate of the community and region

2. The general status of compensation decisions in the private sector of the community

3. The compensation decisions for other employees of the local government

4. A general review of the competitive position of the local government in the local government's market area

5. A comparative salary review.

In summary, the performance evaluation of a professional manager can provide input into compensation decisions by the local elected body. However, the communication value of an evaluation is best served by a periodic evaluation not directly tied to compensation.

The Evaluation Results

The evaluation serves as the written, formal record of the conversation between the manager and elected body and consists of two important sections. The first section is the elected body's appraisal of the manager's performance with respect to the previously agreed-upon goals for the period under review as well as the general performance of the organization. The second section contains an agreed-upon list of the goals to be accomplished during the next appraisal period as well as any specific performance areas identified for improvement.

What Others Are Doing: Survey Results

In developing this handbook, the task force surveyed a sample of local government managers within the United States to obtain information on current evaluation practices. The key findings of the survey suggest that the evaluation process is a problem for a sizeable number of managers. Fortunately, though, most respondents did not report problems with their evaluations and took the time to comment on key aspects of successful appraisals. These comments provide clues to the common pitfalls related to the evaluation process and, more importantly, suggestions for improving the process. This section of the handbook describes these survey findings.

The most common challenges managers and elected bodies face with the evaluation process revolve around four general areas: failure to undertake evaluations, lack of a credible appraisal process, lack of knowledge of the council-manager form of government, and lack of communication. Each of these topics is briefly discussed below.

Failure to Undertake Evaluations

Employee appraisals are a standard feature of most workplaces. They serve as a means of enhancing employee performance as well as the overall effectiveness of the organization. Indeed, employee appraisals serve similar purposes as performance measures of programs and services. In both cases, we seek to identify opportunities for continual improvement. Yet people avoid completing performance appraisals, most likely because properly completed appraisals require time and effort. Other reasons for avoidance may include fear of criticism or the underlying stress associated with the appraisal process. Neglecting to undertake regular performance appraisals, however, can lead to underachievement. Worse yet, failing to complete appraisals on a regular basis can lead to unfounded assumptions that all is well when it is not. It is therefore important to establish a regular pattern of appraisals.

The survey responses identified two methods to help ensure that appraisals are conducted on a regular basis. The most common method is to place a require-

ment for an annual evaluation within the employment contract. The requirement should also specify a time of year—often a time that is less busy than others. The other method is to establish an appraisal time at a regularly scheduled annual meeting, such as a board retreat. But while this method achieves the goal of a scheduled appraisal, it is a less satisfactory approach because it may easily dilute the focus necessary for a good appraisal.

Lack of a Credible Evaluation Process

Another common challenge that survey respondents noted is the lack of a credible evaluation process. Problems include lack of structure, little to no preparation, and limited understanding of appraisals, both purpose and process. Process issues may be addressed through formal training of both the manager and council. Training can be accomplished through work sessions with human resource professionals. Another approach is to team up with CEOs and board members of locally-based institutions that have the same challenge and jointly sponsor training programs. Although not as effective as training, the use of standard evaluation forms, customized to a community's goals, is another way of ensuring a more structured process. Lastly, most managers who are satisfied with their appraisal processes noted that one member of the elected body, typically the mayor, provided active oversight of the process and kept discussions on point and on track.

Lack of Knowledge of the Council-Manager Form of Government

Lack of knowledge about the community's form of government and/or the day-to-day work of the manager is another factor that was cited as hindering quality appraisals. In this case, providing information as early as possible to newly elected officials about the form of government is recommended. This can include meeting with those officials and discussing the manager's duties and responsibilities as well as taking them on field visits. Another approach is to partner with the statewide municipal league and/or municipal clerks association to provide seminars on the form of government. Managers can also use opportunities such as community functions to inform the general public about its form of government. Some jurisdictions use the "policy governance" model, whereby

the explicit roles of the manager, elected body, and other key staff such as attorney are clearly defined and documented. Removing misunderstandings and filling informational voids about the form of government can greatly improve appraisals because such efforts clarify the duties and responsibilities of both the manager and the board.

Lack of Communication

Perhaps the most important ingredient for successful appraisals is effective means of communications between manager and elected officials. As in any human relationship, effective communication is key to understanding and removing faulty assumptions. Achieving superior levels of communication requires active listening and regularity. And the benefits of such attention are high. For instance, survey respondents noting the most satisfaction with the appraisal process use a wide variety of means to regularly communicate with their elected bodies. They meet with elected officials on an individual basis and talked with them regularly via telephone. These same managers provide regular written and verbal reports, typically at each board meeting, that discuss the progress on council goals and objectives, strategic plans, and prior evaluation topics, as well as on operational and special topic issues. More detailed reports are provided on a quarterly basis. In addition, many managers meet with their elected bodies more than once a year with a single-issue focus to discuss progress, redefinition, and resourcing of established goals and objectives, strategic plans and efforts, etc. These additional meetings provide time to focus on progress and reduce the probability of end-of-year surprises.

Creating an effective organization takes time and effort. It also requires regular evaluation of services and operations. Evaluating employee performance, especially the manager's, is a vital element of successful organizations. Objective appraisals can be achieved with an accurate understanding of the manager's and elected officials' duties and responsibilities. Communicating regularly and effectively through a variety of means is a vital element of successful organizations and employee appraisals.[3]

Supplemental Approaches

The basic process for evaluations may be supplemented or expanded by using other tools, such as self-evaluations, periodic check-ins, 360-degree assessments, and conversation evaluations.

Self-Evaluations

It is recommended that a self-evaluation component be included in whatever type of evaluation is used. The purpose of a self-evaluation is for the manager to reflect upon his or her level of performance in achieving the organizational objectives, including both internal and external accomplishments and challenges in handling specific tasks and taking organizational direction. In a public setting, process and perception can be as important as outcomes, and managers should include all three in a self-evaluation. Thus, a manager's self-evaluation should make clear to elected officials the process by which the manager pursued individual goals, and the perceptions of both the manager and stakeholders of the manager's success or failure in meeting those goals. A manager's self-evaluation should be customized to the needs of each governmental entity.

Periodic Check-ins

There is a management philosophy that says there should be no surprises during an evaluation. Managers should be continually evaluating, assessing, measuring, and communicating with employees. Providing this type of continuous evaluation is a greater challenge, however, for elected boards because it requires the participation of all board members—since the manager reports to a group and not a single individual supervisor. If a process is in place for formal evaluations of the manager, such evaluations likely occur just once per year. The annual evaluation can be a stressful time for all involved, and it can also be a challenge to remember all that has occurred over the past year. Moreover, it is easy for annual assessments to skew toward recent events, challenges, and successes while deemphasizing activities that occurred nine or ten months ago. In reality, an elected body's perception of a manager's job performance is often viewed through lenses crafted by the "crisis of the day" or by how smoothly the last board meeting went. A more workable alternative is periodic check-ins.

Periodic check-ins, such as once per quarter, can help reduce the stress and minimize the surprises that can come when a manager's performance is evaluated only annually. A periodic review of a manager's work plan can help remind the elected body of the manager's long-term goals (as set by the organization) so that both parties can evaluate the manager's progress toward meeting those agreed-upon goals. If progress on the work plan has slowed down or other challenges have arisen along the way, a quarterly check-in offers the manager

an opportunity to self-reflect on his or her performance as well as a forum to explain delays. It can also provide the manager the opportunity to remind the board of the 14 core areas noted in the ICMA Practices for Effective Local Government Leadership that are critical and are part of operating effectively on a day-to-day basis.

A periodic check-in on the manager's work plan is also important when faces on the elected board change, such as after an election, resignation, or reassignment of committees. By apprising the new board members of the manager's work plan, the manager is making certain that the new officials understand and are supportive of the projects or goals that he or she is working on.

360-Degree Assessments

Another form of appraisal process is the 360-degree assessment, which is sometimes referred to as a "self-development" tool. Generally speaking, the 360-degree assessment consists of an employee obtaining feedback from supervisors, subordinates, and peers. In this case, the manager completes a self-evaluation as well, with a sample of the workforce providing the subordinate feedback. In some instances, feedback is also obtained from those outside the organization, such as citizens who have frequently worked with the manager and use the jurisdiction's services regularly.

Some jurisdictions include the 360-degree assessment as part of the manager's appraisal process. The ICMA Voluntary Credentialing Program also uses this method as part of maintaining the credential; however, ICMA's assessments ask only behavioral questions. They do not cover progress toward organizational goals.

In most cases a 360-degree assessment is conducted digitally via the Internet. Raters are provided evaluation forms that are returned to an independent third party via the Internet in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

One of the chief benefits of the 360-degree assessment process is that it provides feedback on competencies that are not regularly seen and therefore are not discussed in the typical performance appraisals. For instance, line staff will see behaviors that elected officials do not see and vice versa. Thus, a manager's performance may be improved because it is evaluated from several different perspectives. However, if the 360-degree assessment is used as part of the appraisal process, caution should be taken so that the evaluation doesn't become a measure of the manager's popularity with staff or the public. The manager works for the elected officials and should be evaluated by them on the basis of their stated expectations.

Conversation Evaluation System[4]

This version of an evaluation is a conversational session between the manager and the elected officials. For situations where there is tension among the elected officials or between the manager and the elected body, a facilitator can be used.

Step #1: Create Factors

The elected officials divide themselves into sub-groups—normally an equal number of officials in each. The number of groups should be small, so for a board with 7 members, there would be a group of 3 people and a group of 4 people. With larger boards—say a county board with 20 people—there might be more groups. Where the situation involves a mayor and other elected officials, the mayor can move between the two groups or can be part of one group. The manager makes up his or her own group.

The elected official groups are given a single question that they can respond to with a number of factors: "What should members of the elected body expect of the manager?" The groups place their answers on a flipchart page. The manager also gets a question: "What do you think the elected body ought to expect of the manager?," to which he or she can also respond with a number of factors listed on a flipchart page.

Step #2: Reach Consensus on the Factors

The subgroups come back together and discuss each of the factors they listed. They work to combine their lists to arrive at between 10 and 15 factors.

Step #3: Assign Weight Values for the Factors

The group divides again, and the subgroups assign points to each of the factors from Step #2. They are given a total of 300 points and may assign from 10 to 30 points to each factor, but each factor must be given an even number of points. More points are given to those items that are a higher priority.

Step #4: Reach Consensus on Weight Values for the Factors

The subgroups come back together again with the point values they have from their discussions. During this conversation, the entire group tries to come to a consensus on how the point values from Step #3 should be allocated.

Step #5: Assign Rating to Each Factor for the Actual Performance of the Manager

The elected officials distribute points to each of the factors on a 1–5 scale, on which 5 is far exceeds expectations, 4 is exceeds expectations, 3 is achieves expectations, 2 is below expectations, and 1 is far below expectations. For example, a 30-point factor would have the following scale:

30–28	Far exceeds expectations (5)
28–26	Exceeds expectations (4)
26–24	Achieves expectations (3)
24–22	Below expectations (2)
22–20	Far below expectations (1)

These points are totaled, and then added to the points from the section below.

Step #6: Select Goals

The board—collectively and in consultation with the manager—comes up with the list of goals for the manager. Together they then assign another 100 points to the goals for the year. So, for example, 50 points could be assigned to Goal #1, Goal #2 could get 20 points, and Goal #3 could get 20 points, leaving 10 points for Goal #4.

The points from the above 5 steps would be added to the 100 points possible from step number 6 and would be totaled for an overall score using the chart below:

400–360	Far exceeds expectations
359–320	Exceeds expectations
319–280	Meets expectations
279–240	Below expectations
239–200	Far below expectations

In summary, this is a conversational evaluation. The evaluators review the factors each year and everybody owns them. From year to year the factors are revised as necessary to reflect the feelings of the elected body, which can change each year.

Data-gathering/Software Resources

Performance evaluation software can be an effective tool for the elected body to prepare manager evaluations. A wide variety of programs are available, enabling elected bodies to have as much or as little input into the rating categories as they wish. Some programs come with rating categories already provided for a variety of positions, some allow the customer to provide the categories, and some are a hybrid. This flexibility allows the elected officials to create a customized rating tool that works best for them.

Some evaluation software programs allow for multiple raters and some for a single rater. If the program only allows for a single rater, all elected officials convene to discuss each category, agree on the rating, and offer comments, while one elected official enters the rating and comments into the software program. In this case, there needs to be trust among the elected officials that all opinions are being heard and recorded. It is then important that all elected officials review the final draft and offer feedback before it is given to the manager.

If a multiple-rater system is used, elected officials will be completing the evaluation away from the rest of the elected body, so it is recommended that there be group discussion beforehand to ensure consistency in the meaning of the rating categories as in opinions about the manager's performance. The elected officials should also meet after they have entered their ratings because the evaluation *is* a group activity, not a multiple individual activity.

A word of warning regarding the multiple-rater system: It may be difficult to make sure that everyone fully participates in the process. Elected officials won't be informed by each other's comments, and consensus can be hard to achieve. Thus, if some elected officials provide more commentary than others, it could skew the overall evaluation.

Even with the use of performance evaluation software, an in-person conversation between the elected body and the manager is needed to review the evaluation and discuss the results.

As noted above, a wide variety of software programs are available, including

- Online survey tools such as Survey Monkey
- Performance evaluation software (SHRM can recommend)
- NeoGov online performance evaluation module

Conclusion

Communication. That is the essential element to maintaining a good relationship between an elected board and the appointed manager. Communication comes in many forms, but the board's evaluation of the manager is a formalized method of communication that should not be overlooked.

The task force that was formed to develop this handbook compiled and considered the best practices for manager evaluations. The group shared numerous ideas and learned a great deal from each other. The final product demonstrates that just as each manager and board are unique, so too must be the evaluation process for each manager. While there are common

methods of evaluation, the tools and methods used to evaluate one manager in one community may not be appropriate for another manager in a neighboring community. To maximize legitimacy and effectiveness and to enhance communication, a manager's evaluation needs to be tailored to the issues and stated goals of the elected body.

That said, the task force also agreed that there are some standard elements—notably, the ICMA Practices for Effective Local Government Leadership—that would enhance any evaluation. These 14 core competencies are the framework for what a manager does on a day-to-day basis, and they warrant acknowledgment in the evaluation process.

Finally, while this handbook offers a variety of ideas on the manager evaluation process, the most important takeaway is that the evaluation must take place and that the process must be mutually agreed upon. There are many ways to get this done, but the manager and the board both deserve the structured communication that the evaluation provides.

Sample Evaluation Forms for Local Government CAOs

- Sample Appraisal of Performance
- Sample Manager Evaluation Form
- Sample Manager Performance Evaluation
- Sample County Administrator Performance Evaluation

Other Resources

- ICMA Practices for Effective Local Government Leadership
- Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator
- ICMA Model Employment Agreement
- ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines

Notes

1 Adapted from City Manager Performance Review, Successful Evaluation Tips, City of Mountlake Terrace, WA

2 Integrity is not simply concerned with whether the manager's behavior is legal; it also addresses the issue of personal and professional ethics: "Demonstrating fairness, honesty, and ethical and legal awareness in personal and professional relationships and activities." ICMA members agree to abide by the ICMA Code of Ethics.

3 Perkins, Jan. "Case Study: It's (Gulp) Evaluation Time." *PM*, July 2005. http://icma.org/Documents/Document/Document/3602

4 Adapted and used with permission from Lewis Bender, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, lewbender@aol.com

Good luck as you head down the road to creating a thriving, vibrant community!

Learning about new issues, trends, and technologies is becoming a bigger part of the job of local government leadership. Turn to organizations like ICMA, which can play an important role in your ongoing education.

Contact us at lifewellrun@icma.org

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