



Public Engagement =
Trust in Government **10**

Ethical Decision Making
in a Crisis **14**

Ethics and Unsavory
Characters **26**

ICMA CODE OF ETHICS

The mission of ICMA is to create excellence in local governance by developing and fostering professional local government management worldwide. To further this mission, certain principles, as enforced by the Rules of Procedure, shall govern the conduct of every member of ICMA, who shall:

1. We believe professional management is essential to efficient and democratic local government by elected officials.

Affirm the dignity and worth of local government services and maintain a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant.

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Activities which undermine public confidence in professional participation in the election of the members of the employing government affairs; encourage communication quality and image of public service.

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ments, promotions, and discipline.

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Elevating ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT:
**WOMEN IN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT**
PAGE 33

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FEATURES »

10

How Public Engagement Produces More Accountable and Effective Government

With government officials hoping for more trust and the public asking for transparency and ethical behavior, there is one solution that addresses both sides: public engagement.

Michael Huling

14

The Importance of Ethical Decision Making in Our Response to Emergencies

Personal and professional ethics provide an opportunity for local government managers to step up to the challenge of any disaster and ensure integrity in our response.

Cheryl A. Hilvert, ICMA-CM

18

"Trust Me, I'm a Leader"

Building a culture of trust will boost employee performance, and the first step begins with you.

John Hamm

22

The Ethical Boundaries When Former Managers Live in Your Town

How former managers conduct themselves in communities they once managed can reflect well or poorly on our profession.

Matt Candland, ICMA-CM

26

Ethics and Unsavory Characters

Navigating ethical situations in local government when the waters are murky

Michael D. Mallinoff, ICMA-CM

30

ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines

The Code of Ethics was adopted by the ICMA membership in 1924, and most recently amended in June 2020.

26



DEPARTMENTS »

2 Letter from the Guest Editor
Elevating Ethical Leadership

6 Letter from the Executive Director
Unintended Technology Outcomes Can Pose Challenges for Local Government Leaders

8 Insights
What Does the ICMA Code of Ethics Mean to You?

9 Next Generation
Emerging Leaders Recognized

41 Assistants and Deputies
Hiring a Veteran as Your Second-in-Command

42 Award Spotlight
The Formation of an Intergovernmental Collaborative Group

44 Professional Services Directory

45 Member Spotlight
Jamie Robichaud

14



SPECIAL SECTION: WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

34 Women to Know: The Next Generation in Local Government

38 Getting Personal with SheLeadsGov

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Elevating *Ethical Leadership*

How to **build trust** in organizations, community, and the profession | BY MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM

Each March, we devote the contents of PM to ethics. We invite our members and experts in the field to share their perspectives, research, and techniques on building ethical competency at the personal and organizational level. This reflects ICMA's and the profession's commitment to the highest of ethical standards in public service.

We lead off this edition with some inspirational comments from four individuals who served on ICMA's Committee on Professional Conduct. From the vantage point of long careers in local government and service vetting ethics cases in their role on the committee, they offer their perspective on the value of the ICMA Code of Ethics.

Each is unique and inspirational so I would encourage you to read them all. Our colleague Rod Gould's comment, in particular, is very relevant in this era of waning trust in government: "Public trust is a tremendous responsibility that every local government leader must embrace and strive to enhance. The ICMA Code of Ethics is essential in earning and maintaining that trust."



MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM, is director of member services and ethics director, ICMA, Washington, D.C. (mperego@icma.org).

"ICMA's Code of Ethics is our North Star in guiding city and county professionals in how we are to build community and serve the public interest."

—Daryl Delabbio, PhD, ICMA-CM

Building trust with the public we serve is a steep challenge in these days where every issue is politicized and community is so polarized. While local government has historically been the level of government earning the highest trust among residents, that level of confidence is slipping. In his article, Michael Huling, a graduate research assistant at the Davenport Institute, makes the case that effective public engagement will promote trust and build relationships. Huling noted, "Public engagement is the key means by which local governments can earn the trust of their residents, be subject to public accountability, and implement more effective policies that advance the common good."

A key lesson from managing during a pandemic is that you can't build needed relationships in your community while knee deep in the crisis. Effective crisis management requires that those relationships be in place before you need to rely upon them. This message was reinforced in many a session held at conferences this last year as the profession reflected on how their communities and organizations reacted

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Creating and Supporting Thriving Communities

ICMA's vision is to be the leading association of local government professionals dedicated to creating and supporting thriving communities throughout the world. It does this by working with its more than 12,000 members to identify and speed the adoption of leading local government practices and improve the lives of residents. ICMA offers membership, professional development programs, research, publications, data and information, technical assistance, and training to thousands of city, town, and county chief administrative officers, their staffs, and other organizations throughout the world.

Public Management (PM) aims to inspire innovation, inform decision making, connect leading-edge thinking to everyday challenges, and serve ICMA members and local governments in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world.



to the pandemic. The other lesson is that managing well during a crisis requires an unbreakable commitment to core values. Strategies and processes can and should be adapted to deal with the situation on the ground. But the best outcomes, including building trust and support with the community, are achieved when you lead with values. This is a point made clear by Cheryl Hilvert, ICMA's Midwest regional director, in her article exploring how three leaders navigated

emergencies in their community. As Hilvert noted, "Rarely is there a situation where our ethics should guide us more than when our communities are facing a crisis, disaster, or in recent times, a worldwide pandemic."

No leader, of course, is successful in managing any situation on their own. They must rely on teams of staff to deliver essential services, provide support to those teams, and ensure that all other elements of local government work.

Bringing out the best performance at the individual level requires that the leader build trust with his or her staff. John Hamm, an executive coach and advisor, addresses why trust is so pivotal in managing people. "When employees don't trust their leaders, they don't feel safe. And when they don't feel safe, they don't take risks. And where there is no risk taken, there is less innovation, less 'going the extra mile,' and therefore, very little unexpected upside. Feeling safe is a primal

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“Do not cave to political pressures that can come in all forms and levels. Your professional reputation is your currency, and it’s hard to retrieve once it’s compromised.”

— Michael Mallinoff,
ICMA-CM

recently awarded \$6 million federal grant for the location of a cruise ship terminal. While the outcome was successful in the long run, he encountered some interesting characters along the way as he navigated an ethical storm. One of the five pieces of advice he offers is, “Do not cave to political pressures that can come in all forms and levels. Your professional reputation is your currency, and it’s hard to retrieve once it’s compromised.”

Ending on a more upbeat note is a story that reminds us to take care of and support each other. In what can be a very tough profession, nothing is more motivating and powerful than knowing that your colleagues have your back. That, coupled with their knowledge and wisdom, can be beneficial to your success. For Matt Candland, currently the township manager for Upper Moreland Township in Pennsylvania, that support appeared in the form of colleagues who once sat in the office he was going to occupy. Upon accepting the position as the borough manager for Carlisle, Pennsylvania, he learned that three former managers lived in and around the community. Being candid, he writes, “I wasn’t sure if this was a good thing or bad thing, but I did worry a little that there might be problems ahead. Would these former managers be helpful or hurtful to my efforts? Would they inappropriately intervene with my elected officials and staff members? Would they write letters to the editor criticizing the elected officials or me? Would they run for office?” Those concerns are reflected in the reality that some former managers can’t let go. Rather than being a source of support, they behave in a way that undermines their colleague. Fortunately, Candland encountered truly outstanding individuals who reached out immediately to welcome him to the community with the offer of support if needed. Candland took them up on the offer, and in doing so, he encountered highly ethical professionals who were sources of friendship and support during challenging times.

I trust you will find these articles helpful in your quest to uphold the high standards of the profession. Please take the time to review the ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines—found on page 30—and reach out to ICMA’s ethics team if you need advice. **PM**

human need.” Hamm encourages leadership to be trustworthy and offers nine specific things they can do to build trust with their staff.

We close out this edition with the personal story of two managers. The title of Michael Mallinoff’s story, “Ethics and Unsavory Characters,” pretty much says it all. It’s a tale that will resonate with many a manager who arrived in a new place only to discover that the community culture was perhaps not as ethical as is optimal. In Mallinoff’s case, his first challenge was to use a



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Learn more and register at icma.org/sheleadsgov2022.



March 2: Webinar: Planning for Economic Recovery

March 2-4: Conference: 2022 Southeast Regional Conference

March 8: Conference: SheLeadsGov Virtual Forum: Resilience 2.0: Redefining Resilient Women in Local Government

March 9: Webinar Series: Effective Supervisory Practices

March 9-11: Conference: 2022 Mountain Plains Regional Conference

March 11: Deadline for Local Government Excellence Award Nominations icma.org/awards

March 15-18: Conference: 2022 West Coast Regional Conference in Conjunction with WCMA

March 23-25: Conference: 2022 Midwest Regional Conference

March 31: Webinar: Getting Started with Climate Action

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Real talks providing insight about the experiences of marginalized and underrepresented persons in local government leadership.

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Want to be Spotlighted by ICMA?

If you are an ICMA member, we want to hear what’s new in your career or organization. All members are welcome to submit – from CAOs to students. Please complete the form at icma.org/spotlight-members. Check out the March Member Spotlight with Jamie Robichaud on the inside back cover of this issue.

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Unintended Technology Outcomes Can Pose Challenges for Local Government Leaders

BY MARC A. OTT

As we move out of crisis mode, we have the opportunity to carefully examine how technology can help us achieve the best for our communities.

There's a pervasive feeling in this moment of profound exhaustion. Delivering public services during an ongoing public health crisis has made incredible demands on local government, which has led to staff shortages and mental health challenges. To keep up, we have relied heavily on technology—by expanding our existing capacity, as well as deploying new and sometimes untested systems.

There is nothing inherently ethical or unethical in our use of technology. But as I and many of you have experienced, there are occasions when a solution meant

to save time, increase productivity, or assist in achieving improved performance metrics has resulted in unintended outcomes.

Technology that gets ahead of our values can undermine our best intentions.

Two years ago, many offices raced to establish a remote work environment—often in organizations in which working from home was not even an option. After 24 months, we have all grown accustomed to computer screens filled with the tiny faces of our work teams, so much so that “Zoom fatigue” has been identified as a workplace hazard. The necessity of adapting to COVID-19

protocols has produced these unintended consequences and now we are searching for ways to adapt yet again.

As leaders, keeping staff and residents engaged is a top priority. As COVID restrictions loosen, we search for ways to reclaim the interpersonal interactions so necessary to achieving organizational goals. One-on-one, in-person conversations remain effective and satisfying for many of us. Another “intended outcome” of this low-tech option is that these interactions are free from distractions. We can fully concentrate on supporting and serving the individual. We can bring our whole selves to the conversation.

Values-driven Technology

Technology that gets ahead of our values can undermine our best intentions. Without a properly trained analyst,

for example, we may be collecting terabytes of data from private citizens that sit in a warehouse unused and could potentially be compromised. In the name of productivity, we may install a communication system that in fact does the opposite and creates greater inefficiencies and frustrations in the workplace with “always on” channels and unclear direction. We might rely so heavily on algorithms for evaluating job applicants that ideal diverse or non-traditional candidates are screened out before ever speaking to an actual recruiter who might appreciate their potential contributions. Performance management systems, too—whether measuring speeding tickets or student absenteeism—can lead to outcomes very different from serving the best interests of our residents.

As we move out of crisis mode, we have the opportunity to more carefully examine how technology, guided by our core values can help us achieve the best and brightest future for our communities. As always, the ICMA Code of Ethics acts as the scaffolding for our decision-making. Our values of transparency and inclusion act as our guide as well. Forming cross-disciplinary and diverse evaluation teams can offer a range of perspectives to better inform the technology selection and deployment process. Involving all stakeholder segments in the testing and rollout phase can both uncover hidden issues and foster a more positive reception for new technologies. It is also important to assess the equity of technology implementation. Will all community segments equally realize the benefits of a new technology, and if not, how can that issue be remedied?

Slowing Down the Process

Across the globe, local governments have been dealing with the clash between operating a city, county, or town at its peak, and ever improving performance with the core values of the community. We want lower crime, but not by using faulty artificial intelligence systems that unjustly target communities of color. We want better traffic management and improved services, but



MARC OTT

is executive director/
CEO of ICMA,
Washington, D.C.



not at the expense of a 24/7 surveillance mentality. We want the convenience of a wide range of online services, but not at the expense of collecting and storing our personal data that could be compromised. Taking the necessary time to consider the input of all stakeholders and to check in with peer communities will slow the process down, but also lead to a more balanced approach. ICMA members and partners have a wealth of information to share on the pitfalls and opportunities of this challenging dichotomy (icma.org/topics/smart-communities). ICMA regional and annual conferences will continue to explore solutions.

When our technology innovations are well-planned, mission- and values-driven, and thoughtfully deployed, they have the power to enhance and even transform the lives of every resident in every community and even avoid unintended outcomes. **PM**

PROFILES OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN ACTION



"The ICMA Credentialed Manager program has helped me sharpen my skills as a manager with the public, elected officials and employees. I love to plan what areas of improvement I need to work on each year and learn through the various presentations, workshops and roundtables at international and state association conferences. I learn the most from my colleagues in the profession."

Shane E. Pace
City Manager
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What Does the ICMA Code of Ethics Mean to You?

ICMA asked former members of the Committee on Professional Conduct (CPC) about the ICMA Code of Ethics.

Lon Pluckhahn, ICMA-CM

ICMA member since 2006

"The Code of Ethics is the bright line separating administration from politics. It is our statement of our guiding principles that help us to ensure that the public good always takes priority over personal ambitions, and a demonstration of our commitment to the public to government that works on their behalf. The Code unites all our members, regardless of our individual differences. Remember that the Code cannot be written to address every specific situation that will come up, so if you have a doubt, ask!"



Rod Gould, ICMA-CM (retired)

ICMA member since 1985

"ICMA's Code of Ethics is our North Star in guiding city and county professionals in how we are to build community and serve the public interest. Because what is ethically correct can be subjective and gray at times, ICMA spells out the ethical guidelines and interpretations as carefully as possible given the wide range of situations managers and assistants face. Further, those guidelines are regularly updated to reflect changing times and circumstances. Lastly, the Code of Ethics is fairly and openly enforced to have consequences. It sets our profession apart from many others and is both a source of pride and strength."



Jane Brautigam

ICMA member since 2001

"In a world where public trust in government leaders has often faltered, ICMA members stand out as public servants whose focus is on the needs of people without regard to status or station. The core values of democracy, equity, and fairness embodied in the Code of Ethics ground our work and focus our efforts on service. They serve as a touchstone and an assurance that local government leaders will deliver with respect and with the best interests of the community in mind. They remind each of us that the work we do is honorable even in the most difficult of times, and that we are part of a larger cohort of colleagues dedicated to excellence and to public service."



Daryl Delabbio, PhD, ICMA-CM (retired)

ICMA member since 1977

"Public trust is a tremendous responsibility that every local government leader must embrace and strive to enhance. The ICMA Code of Ethics is essential in earning and maintaining that trust. Throughout my career I had a framed copy of the Code in a visible place in my office for me to refer to often. Some may view a professional code of ethics as restrictive. I view the ICMA Code of Ethics and its accompanying guidelines as empowering. It empowers us as leaders to always serve the best interests of the public in an ethical manner."



Contact Us

ICMA encourages individuals seeking confidential advice on issues of ethics to contact Martha Perego, director of Member Services and Ethics, at mperego@icma.org or 202-962-3668; or Jessica Cowles, ethics advisor, at jcowles@icma.org or 202-962-3513.

Emerging Leaders Recognized

ICMA honors the latest recipients of the
Judy L. Kelsey Scholarship | BY ERIKA COOPER

ICMA is pleased to award this year's Local Government Management Fellowship Judy L. Kelsey Scholarship to two current Fellows.

Established in August 2019, this award is named in honor of Judy Lyn Kelsey, a pioneer in the local government management profession and long-time ICMA member, who generously gifted \$109,000 to ICMA in her estate. With her gift, ICMA established the Local Government Management Fellowship Judy L. Kelsey Scholarship to assist emerging women leaders who have been accepted into the ICMA Local Government Management Fellowship program (LGMF), which places a Fellow in a manager's or department head's office in a council-manager community.

This year's winners of the Judy L. Kelsey Award are Fellows Amber Cabrera and Jeannetta Maxena.

Amber Cabrera is currently serving as a Fellow in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where she works in the City Manager's Office in the Government Affairs and Economic Division. She is working with local businesses, entrepreneurs, and the city's partner agencies on reinvestment strategies and growth opportunities. Amber is also working with public policy and economic development grant acquisitions on the state and federal levels. She graduated from Lynn University with a master's in public administration in August 2021. Before joining the LGMF program, she worked in the private sector as a senior case manager for the Fenstersheib Law Group.

In her essay, Amber shared, "I firmly believe that as staff in public service, our positive interactions with the community can help restore the broken levels of trust between the public and local government." Amber shows an evident dedication to the profession and plans on using the scholarship to take a step closer toward financial recovery after a year of financial drawbacks caused by the pandemic.



It is my dream to become a city manager, ensure that the women in my organization earn the same as the men, and mentor the next generation of women leaders.

Jeannetta Maxena is currently serving as a senior management Fellow in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where she works in the City Manager's Office, Division of Neighbor Support, administering seven different programs and participating in commission meetings to ensure the executive leadership team receives commission action items. Jeannetta has also administered Community Court, which is a city-wide effort to eliminate the homeless-to-incarceration pipeline. She graduated from the University of Central Florida with a master's in public administration. Before joining the LGMF program, she worked as a history teacher for Orange County Public Schools and Lake County Schools. She also worked for the Central Florida American Society for Public Administration as a vice president for programming and board secretary.

In her essay, Jeannetta shared, "The Judy Lyn Kelsey Scholarship awards women who are passionate about public service and are in the early stages of their local government career. It is my dream to become a city manager, ensure that

the women in my organization earn the same as the men, and mentor the next generation of women leaders." Jeannetta shows a commitment to improving the profession and plans on using the scholarship to secure stable housing and explore professional development opportunities to take her career to the next level. **PM**

To learn more about the LGMF program visit [ICMA.org/lgmf](https://www.icma.org/lgmf).



ERIKA COOPER is a program manager in career and equity advancement for ICMA (ecooper@icma.org).



HOW PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

PRODUCES MORE ACCOUNTABLE AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

With government officials hoping for more trust and the public asking for transparency and ethical behavior, there is one solution that addresses both sides: public engagement.

BY MICHAEL HULING

Public distrust of government continues to be a theme in our discourse, with recent Gallup polling revealing just how serious it has become.¹ While trust in the federal government remains abysmal, there has also been a noticeable decline in the public's trust of local government. Gallup's results show that two-thirds of Americans trust their local government to handle problems, which represents a five-point drop since 2020, and the lowest percentage in over two decades.

There are a variety of plausible explanations for this depreciation of trust, though many point to the pandemic as the



proximate cause. There's good reason to think this is the case as the past two years have been extremely difficult in countless ways. Public health concerns have been punctuated by economic anxiety, educational loss, and social alienation, leading many Americans to blame their government leaders. There is some merit to all of this, but what if these are symptoms of an underlying problem that is more enduring?

In 2019, Pew Research Center published a comprehensive report examining the declining trust that Americans have in government and in

84% of Americans say that it's possible to improve trust in government. How? The leading response is more transparency and disclosure of what government is doing.

each other.² When asked about the biggest problems in American life, 67 percent said "ethics in government." The only problem that ranked higher was drug addiction, indicating how concerned citizens are with the behavior of those entrusted with our communities and country.

Accountability, Ethics, and Trust

The relationship between ethics and trust in government is fairly straightforward. After all, why would you trust someone

whom you believe is behaving unethically, particularly when they are doing so while in a position of power and authority?

In 2010, the city of Bell, California, became the quintessential example of local corruption following shockingly unethical behavior by government officials. It started in 2005, when the city created a ballot measure that would alter its bylaws to make it a “charter city” as opposed to “general law.” The measure was promoted by the city council and city manager as a way to increase local control by effectively insulating Bell from state oversight, and it passed by a 336-54 margin. In a city with over 35,000 residents, only 390 voted on a deeply consequential measure, suggesting that the residents of Bell were very disengaged.

Having successfully removed state oversight with little public attention, the salaries of the council and staff soared.³ The city manager’s salary reached nearly \$800,000, which is several times higher than the average.⁴ Investigations revealed numerous other scandals, resulting in graft and corruption charges, as well as the near dissolution of the city itself. This shameful episode demonstrates how unethical behavior can go largely unchecked when there is no public accountability. Bell’s recovery is equally instructive, however, as residents were faced with the very real decision of whether they would commit to saving their city or allow it to be consolidated with neighboring cities.

Ken Hampian was appointed interim city manager in 2011, bringing a commitment to public engagement, transparency, and accountability as integral

With government officials hoping for more trust and the public asking for transparency and ethical behavior, there is one solution that addresses both sides: public engagement.

elements of how the city would govern moving forward. With the consultation and assistance of the Davenport Institute, the city conducted an extensive community outreach strategy, distributed annual budget surveys, and held a goal-setting community forum and subsequent council workshop.⁵ Bell was able to survive and rebound, as residents and government officials worked together to develop a vision for the community. While this example is now a decade old, the lessons learned about the importance of ethics in government are timeless.

Trust matters, and building it was indispensable to Bell’s recovery. Pew’s study found that 64 percent of Americans believe low trust makes it more difficult to solve problems, while 84 percent say that it’s possible to improve trust in government. How? The leading response is more transparency and disclosure of what government is doing.

Effective Public Engagement Promotes Trust and Builds Relationships

With government officials hoping for more trust and the public asking for transparency and ethical behavior, there is

one solution that addresses both sides: public engagement. This begins with a genuine commitment by government officials to not only inform citizens, but to invite their participation in the decision-making process. Explaining what policies and procedures are being administered is an important but insufficient step, as it reaffirms the top-down structure that has produced much of the current distrust.

In addition to engaging with individual residents, local governments must also build partnerships with the various civic organizations that are the foundation of our communities. Religious congregations, businesses, schools, charities, and other associations are constitutive of the community, and must be included in comprehensive public engagement efforts that move toward collaborative governance. Partnering with these institutions of civil society not only ensures that local governments are receiving maximum input, but also creates accountability as officials are under the watchful eye of the community.

Relationships and trust take time to build, which is to say that they are not established immediately but develop gradually through consistent interaction. The same applies to public engagement, which must also be recurrent to make a lasting impact. Embedded deliberation is achieved through formally organized public engagement practices in which the public is regularly invited to participate directly in the decision-making process.⁶ In practice, this means that engagement is not merely an occasional tool to receive public input, but a formal component

of how governments diagnose problems, contemplate solutions, and determine implementation—all with the oversight and contribution of the community.

Engaged Communities Are Strong and Cohesive

There is a sort of compound interest that results from sustained public engagement that benefits governments and community members alike. As residents become better informed about local issues, government officials likewise learn more about how these issues are tangibly affecting the community. Both



sides become more aware through this deliberation, while cultivating the skills and habits necessary to make incremental improvements for the community. This promotes accountability and public support for the decisions that are made, leading to greater trust, better policies, and a more cohesive community.

This potential for greater social cohesion is also relevant, as trust within the community is often upstream of trust in government. The same Pew report notes that one of the biggest differences between “high trusters” and “low trusters” is their confidence

in others to “work together to solve community problems.” What better captures the purpose and practice of public engagement—and local self-government, more broadly—than citizens coming together to address their shared challenges? Thus, effective public engagement can foster trust between residents and local government, as well as between residents themselves.

Restoring public trust in government is no easy task, particularly because a reputation of unethical conduct can be extremely difficult to overcome. We all want more accessible, responsive, and

ethical government—not as some aspirational ideal, but as a necessary condition for our communities to flourish. Public engagement is the key means by which local governments can earn the trust of their residents, be subject to public accountability, and implement more effective policies that advance the common good. **PM**

³ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2010-jun-24-la-me-maywood-20100624-story.html>

⁴ <https://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2010/07/bell-city-manager-might-highest-paid-in-nation-787637-a-year.html>

⁵ https://publicpolicy.pepperdine.edu/davenport-institute/content/case_stories/bell-goal-setting-long.pdf

⁶ https://www.kettering.org/sites/default/files/product-downloads/Sustaining_Public_Engagement.pdf

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES

¹ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/355124/americans-trust-government-remains-low.aspx>

² <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/22/key-findings-about-americans-declining-trust-in-government-and-each-other/>

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THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN OUR RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES

Personal and professional ethics provide an opportunity for local government managers to step up to the challenge of any disaster and ensure integrity in our response.

BY CHERYL
A. HILVERT,
ICMA-CM

Every March, ICMA and its members celebrate Ethics Awareness Month. This celebration reminds us how the ICMA Code of Ethics is the foundation of a professional local government management career and provided many examples where our personal and professional ethics have guided our day-to-day work and during special and challenging circumstances.



Rarely is there a situation where our ethics should guide us more than when our communities are facing a crisis, disaster, or in recent times, a worldwide pandemic.

As local government managers, we are always subject to dealing with the impact of disasters and crises, managing through those situations, providing the best public services possible for our communities, and helping people to recover and get past the situation at hand. In recent years, most of us have seen at least a couple of situations that have tested us, including:

- The public health emergency of COVID-19.
- National and environmental disasters, including tornadoes, hurricanes, flooding, windstorms, and severe winter weather.
- Civil protests, racial and religious violence.
- Economic disruption.

RARELY IS THERE A SITUATION WHERE OUR ETHICS SHOULD GUIDE US MORE THAN WHEN OUR COMMUNITIES ARE FACING A CRISIS, DISASTER, OR IN RECENT TIMES, A WORLDWIDE PANDEMIC.

For any of us who have faced a disaster or crisis in our community, we know that we tend to be at our best when responding to crises—people do their jobs, teamwork becomes second nature, and individuals rise

to the challenge to do more than they think they can. But while crises and disasters create opportunities for us to excel at our technical tasks like putting out the fire, cleaning up after a storm, issuing condemnation orders for damaged buildings, communicating during times of civil unrest, repairing infrastructure, and even addressing revenue shortfalls, there is another side to disaster management that we all must be prepared for—the ethical side of decision making.

Ethical Leadership Matters

In a blogpost on COVID-19 vaccination outcomes, Martha Perego, ICMA's director of member services and ethics, reminds us that in all situations—normal operations as well as in crises and disaster situations—ethical leadership matters.¹ She said, "The local government profession

operates from a foundational set of values dedicated to serving the best interests of all. That includes a commitment to integrity, fairness, and equity in all aspects of service delivery, even in the most dire of emergencies so that we can merit the trust of those we serve."

Perego describes four steps that managers can take in any situation to enhance fairness and equality in our community outreach and our services and help to build the public's confidence in our ability to meet their needs, including:

1. **Lead from the front** by being the role model for ethical conduct.
2. **Emphasize values** by focusing on shared values between you, your staff, and the community in every aspect of your response.
3. **Adhere to the rules** and focus on equality and fairness in your work.



4. **Fix the flaws** by reviewing and reviewing again the service and response you provide and learn where you can improve the next time. You will have a next time.

In a webinar from the ICMA Coaching Program, ethics framed the presentations of three seasoned local government managers on the topic of “Response to Emergencies that Impact all Citizens: Rights of the Individual v. Health and Welfare of Community.”² Presenters shared personal stories of when their ethics helped guide their community’s response and approach to a crisis.

Strategies for Ethical Leadership

Randy Reid, ICMA Southeast Regional Director and former local government manager, shared the story of an international incident where a religious leader, in the aftermath of September 11, threatened to publicly burn a Quran in Gainesville, Florida. The incident—which spanned a period of two years—agitated the community, created an international outcry that was fueled by the media, and resulted in coordinated governmental involvement at the local, state, and federal levels. Ultimately, the incident culminated in an organized, creative, and ethical response that reflected community values

and resulted in civil harmony in the community.

Reid discussed his strategies for being an ethical leader, including:

- Prepare yourself and others for dealing ethically and safely with emergencies.
- Recognize that you are always on ethical “active duty” demonstrating a conscience in emergencies.
- Understand that if you walk past something wrong and do nothing to correct it, your behavior condones it.
- Avoid creating ethical dilemmas for others: set parameters for an agile response.
- State clearly that how someone achieves results matters as much as the result.

OUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO STEP UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF ANY DISASTER AND ENSURE INTEGRITY IN OUR RESPONSE.



including pre-event planning and training, emergency operations/decisions during the event, post-event in assessing damage and resource allocation and in mitigation efforts to recover, redevelop, and prevent/minimize instances in the future.

Community Relationships

Opal Mauldin-Jones, city manager of Lancaster, Texas, shared her stories of law enforcement encounters—including both a taser and shooting—which easily could have resulted in community unrest and protest. She discussed the importance of quality relationships, both internally within the city and externally with the community, emphasizing that relationships with civic groups, homeowners' associations, nonprofits, and the faith-based community can do much to contribute to positive recovery from any crisis.

She also discussed the importance of openness and transparency at all times, including the importance of apolitical leadership, quality communications and city policies that were accessible and understood by the public, suggesting that engaging the public in your work and regularly receiving feedback on everything from development projects to review of police policies is important work for any manager.

Mauldin-Jones also reminds us that as local government managers, we must always strive to find our “True North,” live our personal and professional values, always adhere to ethical decision making, and remember that our

community is always our best partner in any disaster or crisis.

Building Trust

Fran Robustelli, city manager, San Leandro, California—no stranger to crises herself—shared insights about the importance of organizational culture in any crisis. She suggests that emergencies can often uncover gaps in organizational culture. While discussing an incident where a school employee was accused of a wrongful act against a child, she emphasized that any situation could add to concerns about the trustworthiness of a local government organization and its employees. In order to build trust, Robustelli suggests that managers:

Take decisive action, as the cost of letting an ethical issue fester because it is too difficult or intangible to resolve can lead to horrible results.

Understand the importance of communication, both internally to the organization and externally to the public, and develop effective messaging strategies, recognizing that at times, we must weigh the protection of our employees and their privacy and well-being with the demand for information from the public.

Recognize that your actions can build or break down organizational trust, so consider a transparent approach rather than being defensive and recognize that words alone matter, and the order of words matter even more.

Make after-action reviews a regular part of your work. These reviews can help to determine if the

crisis was avoidable and provide an opportunity to find improvement.

As Randy, Opal, and Fran remind us, our personal and professional ethics provide an opportunity for us to step up to the challenge of any disaster—regardless of type or duration—and ensure integrity in our response. And in doing so, Martha Peregó reminds us that, “We all share the tendency to overestimate our character.” To avoid that tendency, always employ ethical decision making. And, toward that end, our ICMA Code of Ethics is always a great place to start! **PM**

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES

¹ <https://icma.org/blog-posts/how-our-ethical-foundation-can-improve-vaccine-outcomes>

² https://icma.elevate.commpartners.com/products/icma-free-coaching-webinar-response-to-emergencies-that-impact-all-citizens-rights-of-the-individual-vs-health-and-welfare-of-community#tab-product_tab_overview

- Explain why emergency decisions are made.
- Show you are willing to document, and accept accountability, for decisions.
- Set the tone and model the conduct you want to see in others.
- Have the courage to confront and mitigate causal factors in post-event recovery.

Reid also reminds us that there are ethical decisions that we must make at each stage of disaster preparation and response. He suggests that we look for opportunities to expand our “technical approach” to crises and incorporate and embed ethics in every stage of planning,

Check out the archived 90-minute webinar, “Response to Emergencies that Impact all Citizens: Rights of the Individual v. Health and Welfare of the Community,” at <https://bit.ly/3rj5mdy>.

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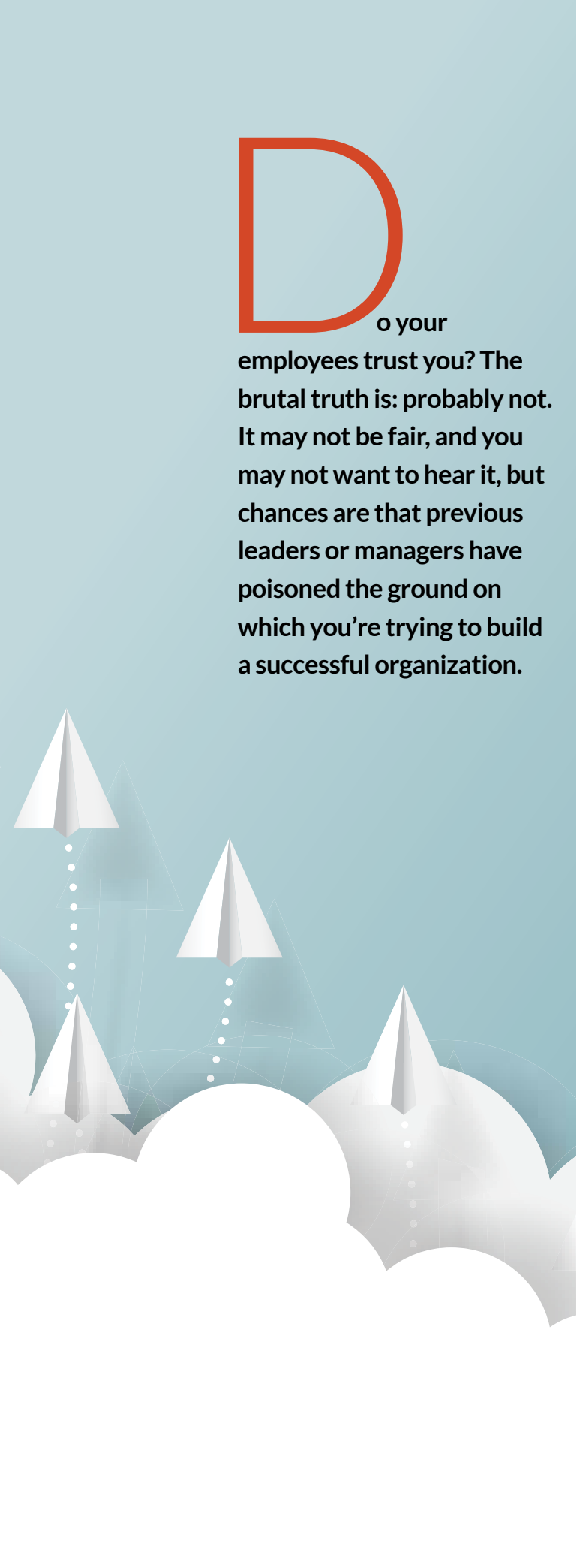


“TRUST ME, I’M A LEADER”

Building a culture
of **trust** will
boost employee
performance,
and the first step
begins with you.

BY JOHN HAMM





Do your employees trust you? The brutal truth is: probably not. It may not be fair, and you may not want to hear it, but chances are that previous leaders or managers have poisoned the ground on which you're trying to build a successful organization.

Make no mistake: unless you and all the leaders in your organization can gain the trust of employees, performance will suffer. And considering how tough it is to survive in today's economic environment, that's bad news for an organization.

Why is trust so pivotal? Because it's a matter of human nature. When employees don't trust their leaders, they don't feel safe. And when they don't feel safe, they don't take risks. And where there is no risk taken, there is less innovation, less "going the extra mile," and, therefore, very little unexpected upside.

Feeling safe is a primal human need. When that need isn't met, our natural response is to focus energy toward a showdown with the perceived threat. Our attention on whatever scares us increases until we either fight or run in the other direction, or until the threat diminishes on its own. Without trust, people respond with distraction, fear, and, at the extreme, paralysis. And that response is hidden inside organizational behaviors—sandbagging quotas, hedging on stretch goals, and avoiding accountability or commitment.

Trustworthiness is the most noble and powerful of all the attributes of leadership. Leaders become trustworthy by building a track record of honesty, fairness, and integrity. For me, cultivating this trust isn't just a moral issue; it's a practical one. Trust is the currency you will need when the time comes for you to make

unreasonable performance demands on your teams. And when you're in that tight spot, it's quite possible that the level of willingness your employees have to meet those demands could make or break your team or organization.

Most employees have been hurt or disappointed at some point in their careers by the hand of power in an organization. That's why nine times out of 10, leaders are in negative trust territory before they make their first request of an employee to do something. Before a team can reach its full potential, leaders must act in ways that transcend employees' fears of organizational power.

The first step begins with you, as manager. As a leader, you must go first—and model trustworthiness for everyone else. Being trustworthy creates trust, yes. But beyond that, there are specific things you can do to provide unusually excellent, trust-building leadership at your organization:

1 Realize that being trustworthy doesn't mean you have to be a Boy Scout or Girl Scout.

You don't even have to be a warm or kind person. On the contrary, history teaches us that some of the most trustworthy people can be harsh, tough, or socially awkward—but their promises must be inviolate and their decisions fair.

As anachronistic as it may sound in the twenty-first century, men and women whose word is their honor

If your employees don't trust their leaders, they won't feel safe. And when they don't feel safe, they don't take risks. And where there is no risk taken, there is less innovation, less "going the extra mile," and, therefore, very little unexpected upside.

and who can be absolutely trusted to be fair, honest, and forthright are more likely to command the respect of others than, say, the nicest guy in the room. You can be tough. You can be demanding. You can be authentically whoever you really are. But as long as you are fair, as long as you do what you say consistently, you will still be trusted.

2 Look for chances to reveal some vulnerability.

We trust people we believe are real and also human (imperfect and flawed)—just like us. And that usually means allowing others to get a glimpse of our personal vulnerability—some authentic (not fabricated) weakness or fear or raw emotion that

allows others to see us as similar to themselves and, therefore, relate to us at the human level.

3 No matter how tempted you are, don't mess with your employees.

Tell the truth, match your actions with your words, and match those words with the truth we all see in the world: no spin, no BS, no fancy justifications, or revisionist history—just tell the truth.

Telling the truth when it is not convenient or popular, or when it will make you look bad, can be tough. Yet, it's

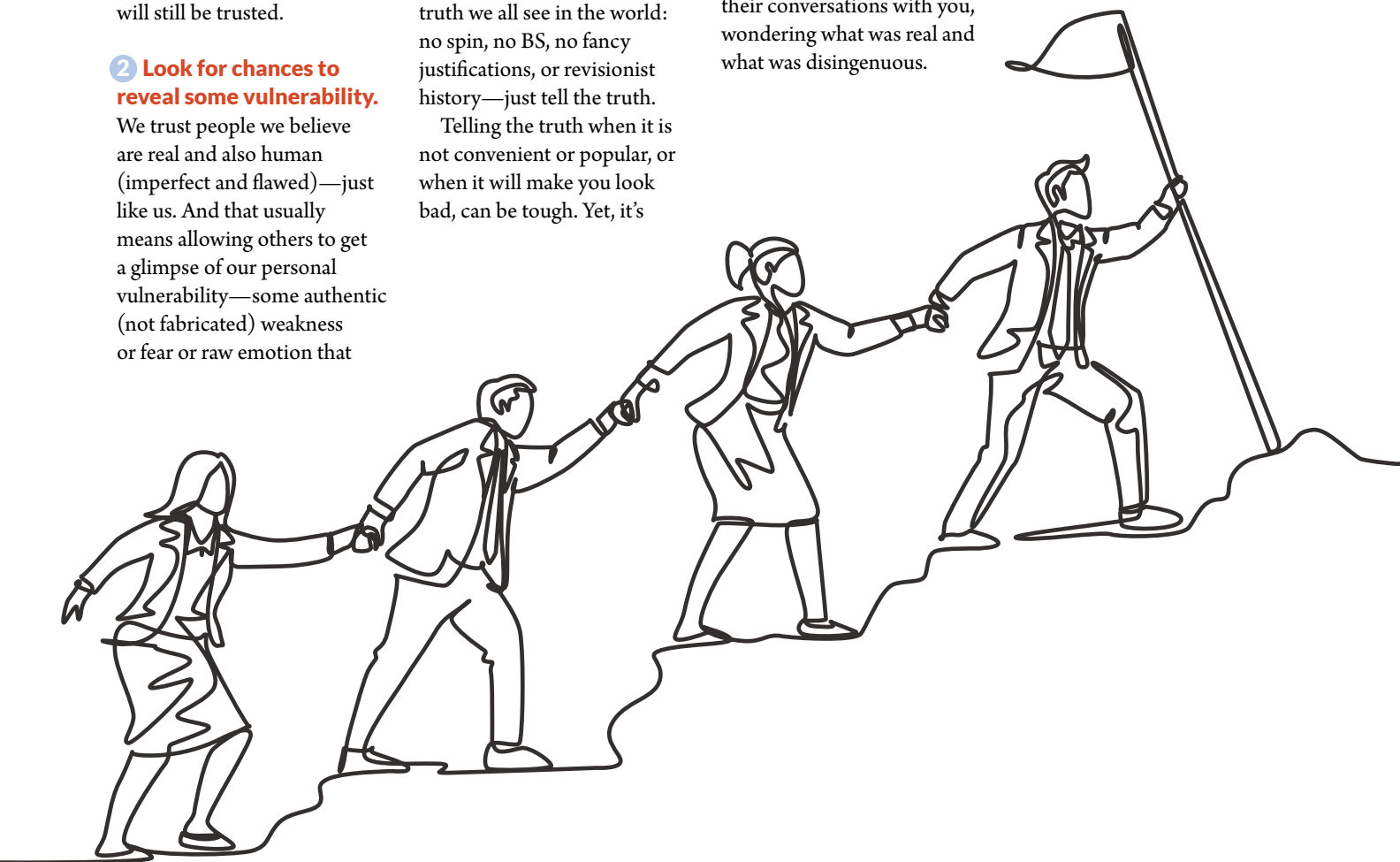
essential to your reputation. Your task as a leader is to be as forthright and transparent as is realistically possible. Strive to disclose the maximum amount of information appropriate to the situation. When you feel yourself starting to bend what you know is the truth or withhold the bare facts, find a way to stop, reformat your communication, and tell the truth.

4 Never, ever make the "adulterer's guarantee."

This happens when you say to an employee, in effect, "I just lied to (someone else), but you can trust me because I'd never lie to you." When an employee sees you committing any act of dishonesty or duplicity, they'll assume that you'll do the same to them. They'll start thinking back through all of their conversations with you, wondering what was real and what was disingenuous.

5 Don't punish "good failures."

This is one of the stupidest things an organization can do—yet it happens all the time. A good failure is a term used in Silicon Valley to describe an initiative by a new business start-up or mature company that, by most measures, is well planned, well run, and well organized—yet for reasons beyond the organization's control (an unexpected competitive product, a change in the market or economy) the initiative fails. In other words, good failures occur when you play well but still lose. When they're punished, you instill a fear of risk taking in your employees, and with that you stifle creativity and innovation. Instead, you should strive to create a digital-camera culture.





There is no expense—financial or otherwise—associated with an imperfect digital photograph. You just hit the delete button, and it disappears. No wasted film, slides, or prints. When we pick up the camera, we are aware of this relationship between mistakes and the consequences—so we click away, taking many more photos digitally than we would have in a world of costly film. Because we know failure is free, we take chances, and in that effort we often get that one amazing picture that we wouldn't have if we were paying a price for all the mistakes.

6 Don't squelch the flow of bad news.

Do you or others in your organization shoot the messenger when a person brings you bad news? If so, you can be certain that the messenger's priority is not bringing you the information you need; it's protecting his or her own hide. That's why in most organizations good news zooms to the top of the organization while bad news—data that reveal goals missed, problems lurking, or feedback that challenges or defeats your strategy—flows uphill like molasses in January.

We must install a confidence and a trust that leaders in the

organization value the facts, the truth, and the speed of delivery, not the judgments or interpretations of good or bad, and that messengers are valued, not shot. Make it crystal clear to your employees that you expect the truth and nothing but the truth from them. And always, *always* hold up your end of that deal. Don't ever shoot the messenger and don't ever dole out some irrational consequence.

Unusually excellent leaders build a primary and insatiable demand for the unvarnished facts, the raw data, the actual measurements, the honest feedback, the real information. Few efforts will yield the payback associated with improving the speed and accuracy of the information you need most to make difficult or complex decisions.

7 Constantly tap into your fairness conscience.

Precise agreements about what is fair are hard to negotiate because each of us has a personal sense of fairness. But at the level of general principle, there is seldom any confusion about what fair looks like. Just ask yourself: Would most people see this as fair or unfair? You'll know the answer (indeed, as a leader, you're paid to know it).

If you treat employees fairly, and you do so consistently, you will set a pattern of behavior for the entire organization. This sense of fairness, critical to the creation of a safe environment, can be reinforced not only by complimenting fair practices but also by privately speaking to—or, if necessary, censuring—subordinates who behave unfairly to others in the organization.

8 Don't take shortcuts.

Every organization wants to succeed. That's why, inevitably, there is a constant pressure to let the end justify the means. This pressure becomes especially acute when either victory or failure is in immediate sight. That's when the usual ethical and moral constraints are sometimes abandoned—always for good reasons, and always “just this once”—in the name of expediency.

Sometimes this strategy even works. But it sets the precedent for repeatedly using these tactics at critical moments—not to mention a kind of “mission creep” by which corner cutting begins to invade operations even when they aren't at a critical crossroads.

Plus, when employees see you breaking the code of organizational honor and integrity to which your organization is supposed to adhere, they lose trust in you. Betray your organization's stated values when you're feeling desperate—by lying to clients or spinning the numbers to get out of trouble—and you devalue the importance of trust and honesty in their eyes. They see you breaking your own rules and suddenly they see you as less trustworthy.

9 Separate the bad apples from the apples that just need a little direction.

The cost of untruths to an organization can be huge in terms of time, money, trust, and reputation. As a leader, you have to recognize that you are not going to be able to fix a thief, a pathological liar, or a professional con artist—all of them must go, immediately.

A working environment of trust is a place where teams stay focused, give their utmost effort, and in the end do their best work.

Trustworthiness is never entirely pure. Everyone fails to achieve perfection. So the goal for a leader is to make those wrong choices as rarely as possible; admit them quickly, completely, and with humility; fix them as quickly as you can; and make full recompense when you cannot. Trust is the most powerful, and most fragile, asset in an organization, and it is almost exclusively created, or hampered, by the actions of the senior leader on the team.

A working environment of trust is a place where teams stay focused, give their utmost effort, and in the end do their best work. It's a place where we can trust ourselves, trust others, trust our surroundings, or—best of all—trust all three. **PM**

Originally printed in Public Management magazine, October 2011.

JOHN HAMM is an executive coach and advisor, as well as the author of the book *Unusually Excellent: The Necessary Nine Skills Required for the Practice of Great Leadership*.





The Ethical Boundaries When Former Managers Live in Your Town

How former managers conduct themselves in communities they once managed can reflect well or poorly on our profession.

BY MATT
CANDLAND





Sometimes a former manager

will decide to live in a community that he or she once managed. When this occurs, how should a former manager conduct himself or herself in these communities? Does this former manager have certain professional obligations to the current manager? Are there certain things a former manager could do that may hurt or help the current manager? What kind of conduct by a former manager is appropriate and what is inappropriate?

From 2012 to 2019, I served as the borough manager of Carlisle, a beautiful, historic, and vibrant town of just under 20,000 residents in south central Pennsylvania. Before my first day of work, I learned that three former managers, who once managed Carlisle, lived in and around the community. I wasn't sure if this was a good thing or bad thing, but I did worry a little that there might be problems ahead. Would these former managers be helpful or hurtful to my efforts? Would they inappropriately intervene with my elected officials and staff members? Would they write letters to the editor criticizing the elected officials or me? Would they run for office?

The three former managers in my community—Al Loomis, Fred Bean, and Steve Hietsch—had a combined 25 years of service to Carlisle. In fact, these three were the three managers who directly proceeded me. Each was a capable, competent, and successful manager in his own right and had made significant contributions to Carlisle and other communities in Pennsylvania. Al Loomis and Fred Bean, in particular, were legendary in Pennsylvania local government.

It didn't take long to realize that these three former managers, rather than being a hindrance or source of frustration, would become a source of expertise, professional advice, moral support, and friendship.

Welcome to the Borough

Shortly after my first day of work, each of these former managers reached out to me, introduced themselves, and welcomed me to the community. They briefly explained their tenures with the borough and described some of their accomplishments and challenges. They also made sure I knew that they were each available if I ever had a question

about past borough events, policies, or history. Of course, this allayed many of my initial concerns about how these three managers would conduct themselves during my tenure as manager. In short, it was a very nice start.

Access to Expertise and Advice

It only took a few months before the first controversial issue arose in Carlisle. Borough council asked me to study the advisability of closing the borough's police dispatch center and allow the County 911 Center to take over. Needless to say, this was an extremely controversial issue with the police and its supporters strongly opposed.

Remembering their kind offer to call them any time, I decided to reach out to Fred Bean and Steve Hietsch. Both turned out to be extremely knowledgeable on the subject and willingly shared their knowledge and perspectives

with me. Both were very helpful in providing background information and advice of where I could find additional information. In the end, thanks in part to Fred and Steve's help, I was able to provide a well-thought-out recommendation for transitioning to the County 911 Center, which the council subsequently voted to approve.

Sometime later, the borough was faced with the prospect of a complete rehabilitation of its aging water and sewer system. The costs would likely be in the tens, and eventually even hundreds of millions of dollars. Again I turned to Al, Fred, and Steve. Each provided insight about their understanding of the state of the two systems, but they also explained how the advice they had received during their tenures now seemed incomplete and even inaccurate. This explained why many improvements had not been completed up to that point. They were able to pinpoint where some of the

roadblocks were and how to navigate through them. Their advice was critical in helping me make the case for why the borough needed to make the improvements. While they did not comment publicly on the matter and did not attend public meetings, their assistance with much-needed background information was essential.

These former managers continued to be a reliable go-to source for background information, expertise, and advice for many other issues that arose. None of them came to me to offer their advice or opinions, but were always willing to help in any way they could and were gracious with their time and insights.

Controversial Political issues

Carlisle is a very politically active community. Dickinson College, a liberal arts college that has been a stakeholder in the community for over 200 years, has taken an increasingly activist role over the past few decades. While each of these

former managers certainly held their own views on political issues, none of them ever entered the political debate. To my knowledge, none of them contacted any elected officials to express their views. None of them wrote a letter to the editor or otherwise commented publicly. If they had, it would have likely created some very challenging circumstances for me and for the then-current council.

Staffing Issues

In the course of my tenure, there were also a few high-profile staffing decisions that I made. One decision included the termination of a long-standing employee with whom these three former managers had worked. While their respective views may have differed a little from each other on what should have been done with this employee, none of them vocalized their opinions. Again, each of them were willing and available to share their experiences with this employee while at the same

WHAT I INITIALLY FEARED WOULD BE AN UNTENABLE SITUATION TURNED OUT TO BE A GREAT BLESSING IN MY PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIFE.

time respecting my decision on the best way forward. To my knowledge, none of them commented publicly or privately on my decision.

Dependable Friends

I served as Carlisle's manager for seven wonderful years. The last year was a bit rocky as the politics changed in the community. Shortly after I announced my resignation in 2019, Al and Fred both reached out to me and said exactly the things that a manager wants to hear when leaving a community. I realized then that these former managers were not only professional colleagues, but had become my friends.

I now serve as the township manager in Upper Moreland Township, just outside of Philadelphia. I still stay in touch

with Al and Fred and consider them friends. From time to time we will share a note or get together for lunch and share war stories and talk about local government. I still consider both Al and Fred as resources I can go to for expertise in local government.

Conclusion

What I initially feared would be an untenable situation turned out to be a great blessing in my professional and personal life. How former managers conduct themselves in communities they once managed can reflect well or poorly on our profession. My experience with these three former managers showed me how professional and ethical former managers conduct themselves and how this not only reflects well on our profession but can be beneficial to the communities they once served. In summary, these three former managers:

- Welcomed me into the community.
- Served as valuable sources of information and expertise.
- Did not involve themselves in local politics.
- Did not involve themselves with elected officials.
- Did not involve themselves in staffing issues.
- Were sources of friendship and support during challenging times.

While some may disagree with what conduct is ethical or appropriate for former managers who live in communities they once served, from my perspective, these three former managers exemplified the pinnacle of professional and ethical conduct. **PM**

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ETHICS and UNSAVORY CHARACTERS

BY MICHAEL D.
MALLINOFF,
ICMA-CM

Navigating ethical situations
in local government when
the waters are murky

I have been a professional manager since 1989. Over the past 33 years, I have served as the chief administrative officer in two historic cities and one large county, and as a department director in two jurisdictions.

There is a certain comfort to usually familiar organizational structures in most local governments. But the challenge often comes when navigating ethics because of

the sometimes-stark differences in community culture.

Throughout my professional peregrinations, one constant has been the ICMA Code of Ethics. Hung prominently in my office, the Code of Ethics provides direction and expectations for the manager, council, and community. But with the cultural differences each community brings, applying the Code can be a matter of interpretation. I recall one manager saying obliquely that we managers know well that one plus one equals two, but politics does not

always work that way. And in a very interesting recent ICMA international committee meeting, an international member suggested that what may work in the States, *for the most part*, may not work in their country—the issue was being an appointed manager and non-political.

Most of my career has been in my home state of Maryland. Maryland has certainly had its share of political corruption. The most well-known being Vice President Spiro Agnew. Often forgotten in the turmoil of President Nixon's



Newport, Rhode Island

impeachment, Agnew pleaded *nolo contendere* to indictments stemming from kickbacks during his time as county executive of Baltimore County and governor of Maryland.

My last full-time appointment was in Baltimore County, where Agnew's portrait is prominently displayed outside the county executive's suite, along with at least one other indicted county executive. My time in Baltimore County was not without ethical challenges; however, the focus of this article will be my time as city manager of Newport, Rhode Island. Rhode Island is the smallest state of the union, but has a large history of public-sector ethical challenges. During the period of time just before, during, and after my tenure, the state had two state supreme court chiefs, judges, a governor, speaker of the house, president of the senate, and mayor of Providence, to name

Throughout my professional peregrinations, one constant has been the ICMA Code of Ethics. Hung prominently in my office, the Code provides direction and expectations for the manager, council, and community.

a few, resign, be indicted, and/or jailed over a whole range of ethical and criminal lapses.

Although Rhode Island had a reputation for mob-tinged corruption, Newport did think itself above the fray. Newport, called America's First Resort, is home to the Gilded Age mansions of the Astors and Vanderbilts. With that history, most of the Newport imbroglios tended to be of

the socialite murder-mystery milieu, such as the alleged murder involving socialite billionaire Doris Duke.

Although I served with some upstanding elected officials, I found that despite Newport being situated on Aquidneck Island, no community is an island and immune from the "culture of corruption" that did pervade much of the state.

When it was announced that I was leaving the city of Annapolis for Newport, there were many people in Annapolis who volunteered their guidance, as the ties between the communities were many through the Naval Academy, history, and sailing. One such informal advisor was a former America's Cup sailor and frequent Newport visitor. My friend invited me to lunch and proceeded to tell me about the people I should meet and how to navigate the

political shoals of my future home. One of the contacts he gave me was a well-connected person related to Katherine Graham, the former publisher of the *Washington Post*.

Once settled into Newport, I scheduled a meet and greet with this new local contact. The meeting was helpful, and she focused my attention on an area of the center city harbor where there was a haphazard-looking houseboat and pier facility, along with the then-derelict American Shipyard across from Goat Island and adjacent to my new neighborhood, The Point. She pointed out that these harbor hotspots needed my intervention because of their at-best unsavory and at-worst mob-related control. She went on at great length about the unethical arrangements of these facilities that she said were based on inside access, such as free dockage at the



A wharf in Newport, Rhode Island

HELPFUL TIPS TO NAVIGATE ETHICAL ISSUES

- 1 Embrace the ICMA Code of Ethics.** Make it part of your contract and hang a copy in your office. Share a copy with your managers. Although they may have their own professional code of ethics, I always made it clear where I was coming from and what I expected.
- 2 Do not cave to political pressures that can come in all forms and levels.** Your professional reputation is your currency, and it's hard to retrieve once it's compromised.
- 3 Be careful associating with entities doing business with your community.** This can be difficult, particularly in small communities. I have always found it fruitful to be a member of a local service club; and you certainly see people at the gym, your children's school, and on the street.
- 4 Most communities have some sort of ethics code and boundaries on accepting gifts.** Do not push those boundaries. The appearance can be as bad as the act. In a recent employment, one of my managers talked of one of his employees accepting a gift to an expensive sporting event. That employee was reprimanded and made to pay back the gratuity. Soon thereafter, the inspector general issued a report on a much bigger, related *quid pro quo*. Those headlines are not your friend.
- 5 As the Code of Ethics advises, be upfront, inform, and document with your elected officials.** It helps them to understand what is going on and can be helpful if and when an issue arises.



Newport Bridge in Newport, Rhode Island

houseboat facility. I ended the lunch by saying I was just new at the job and would look into the issues, but suggested, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that someone with her pedigree would be better suited to take on people of that gravitas. As I would soon find out, I would soon be at the center of it all.

Just before I arrived in Newport, the city had received a \$6 million federal grant for the location of a yet-unspecified cruise ship terminal. It soon became apparent that everyone had ideas for where it should go, and two included the aforementioned unsavory and mob-related locations. After public meetings, the community started to coalesce around the shipyard, the in-town harbor houseboat location, and the adjacent Goat Island. The shipyard was problematic because of the ownership, rumors that the price for the docking area was to bail out the owners from a mob-originated loan, and the reluctance of the neighborhood in having a busy port nearby. The Goat Island proposal was for a large cruise ship pier that was also not liked by the adjacent residents. And the in-town harbor location was not liked by the unsavory operator and perhaps some connected folks who utilized his dock access.

After numerous transparent meetings, we decided on the in-harbor location, which meant evicting the squatter houseboat operator who had, at best, an informal agreement with the city fathers to operate. After much consternation, he was evicted and was last seen bailing out his sinking houseboat on his way to adjacent Jamestown Island. As can happen after making a tough decision, the police stood guard near my home for a few days

after receiving threats from the evicted squatter and family. At the new facility, we were able to create a fully functional harbormaster's office and multi-modal transportation hub that would handle the cruise ship tenders, inter- and intra-harbor ferry piers, and surface bus transportation, as well as a beautiful public park. The former American Shipyard, that was reputed to be controlled by a mob financier and used for stripping military ships, was soon thereafter purchased by a local entrepreneur who rebuilt it into the now very successful Newport Shipyard. The shipyard has a 250-ton boat lift, yacht refitting and pier facilities, and the fantastic Belle's Cafe.

In the end, good government and ethics prevailed. But not without much debate, arm twisting, and a whole lot of Tums—a manager's best friend! **PM**

MICHAEL D. MALLINOFF,
ICMA-CM,



has been a local government manager for 33 years, including city manager in Newport, Rhode Island; and Annapolis, Maryland; as well as county administrator in Charles County, Maryland.

ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines

The ICMA Code of Ethics was adopted by the ICMA membership in 1924, and most recently amended by the membership in June 2020. The Guidelines for the Code were adopted by the ICMA Executive Board in 1972, and most recently revised in June 2020.

The mission of ICMA is to advance professional local government through leadership, management, innovation, and ethics. To further this mission, certain principles, as enforced by the Rules of Procedure, shall govern the conduct of every member of ICMA, who shall:

Tenet 1. We believe professional management is essential to efficient and democratic local government by elected officials.

Tenet 2. Affirm the dignity and worth of local government services and maintain a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant.

GUIDELINE

Advice to Officials of Other Local Governments. When members advise and respond to inquiries from elected or appointed officials of other local governments, they should inform the administrators of those communities in order to uphold local government professionalism.

Tenet 3. Demonstrate by word and action the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity in all public, professional, and personal relationships in order that the member may merit the trust and respect of the elected and appointed officials, employees, and the public.

GUIDELINES

Public Confidence. Members should conduct themselves so as to maintain public confidence in their position and profession, the integrity of their local

government, and in their responsibility to uphold the public trust.

Length of Service. For chief administrative/ executive officers appointed by a governing body or elected official, a minimum of two years is considered necessary to render a professional service to the local government. In limited circumstances, it may be in the best interests of the local government and the member to separate before serving two years. Some examples include refusal of the appointing authority to honor commitments concerning conditions of employment, a vote of no confidence in the member, or significant personal issues. It is the responsibility of an applicant for a position to understand conditions of employment, including expectations of service. Not understanding the terms of employment prior to accepting does not justify premature separation. For all members a short tenure should be the exception rather than a recurring experience, and members are expected to honor all conditions of employment with the organization.

Appointment Commitment. Members who accept an appointment to a position should report to that position. This does not preclude the possibility of a member considering several offers or seeking several positions at the same time. However, once a member has accepted a formal offer of employment, that commitment is considered binding unless the employer makes fundamental changes in the negotiated terms of employment.

Credentials. A member's resume for employment or application for ICMA's Voluntary Credentialing Program shall completely and accurately reflect the member's education, work experience, and personal history. Omissions and inaccuracies must be avoided.

Professional Respect. Members seeking a position should show professional respect for persons formerly holding the position,

successors holding the position, or for others who might be applying for the same position. Professional respect does not preclude honest differences of opinion; it does preclude attacking a person's motives or integrity.

Reporting Ethics Violations. When becoming aware of a possible violation of the ICMA Code of Ethics, members are encouraged to report possible violations to ICMA. In reporting the possible violation, members may choose to go on record as the complainant or report the matter on a confidential basis.

Confidentiality. Members shall not discuss or divulge information with anyone about pending or completed ethics cases, except as specifically authorized by the Rules of Procedure for Enforcement of the Code of Ethics.

Seeking Employment. Members should not seek employment for a position that has an incumbent who has not announced his or her separation or been officially informed by the appointive entity that his or her services are to be terminated. Members should not initiate contact with representatives of the appointive entity. Members contacted by representatives of the appointive entity body regarding prospective interest in the position should decline to have a conversation until the incumbent's separation from employment is publicly known.

Relationships in the Workplace. Members should not engage in an intimate or romantic relationship with any elected official or board appointee, employee they report to, one they appoint and/or supervise, either directly or indirectly, within the organization.

This guideline does not restrict personal friendships, professional mentoring, or social interactions with employees, elected officials and Board appointees.

Influence. Members should conduct their professional and personal affairs in a manner that demonstrates that they cannot be

improperly influenced in the performance of their official duties.

Conflicting Roles. Members who serve multiple roles – either within the local government organization or externally – should avoid participating in matters that create either a conflict of interest or the perception of one. They should disclose any potential conflict to the governing body so that it can be managed appropriately.

Conduct Unbecoming. Members should treat people fairly, with dignity and respect and should not engage in, or condone bullying behavior, harassment, sexual harassment or discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, age, disability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Tenet 4. Serve the best interests of the people.

GUIDELINES

Impacts of Decisions. Members should inform their governing body of the anticipated effects of a decision on people in their jurisdictions, especially if specific groups may be disproportionately harmed or helped.

Inclusion. To ensure that all the people within their jurisdiction have the ability to actively engage with their local government, members should strive to eliminate barriers to public involvement in decisions, programs, and services.

Tenet 5. Submit policy proposals to elected officials; provide them with facts, and technical and professional advice about policy options; and collaborate with them in setting goals for the community and organization.

Tenet 6. Recognize that elected representatives are accountable to their community for the decisions they make; members are responsible for implementing those decisions.

Tenet 7. Refrain from all political activities which undermine public confidence in professional administrators. Refrain from participation in the election of the members of the employing legislative body.

GUIDELINES

Elections of the Governing Body.

Members should maintain a reputation for serving equally and impartially all members of the governing body of the local government they serve, regardless of party. To this end, they should not participate in an election campaign on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for the governing body.

Elections of Elected Executives. Members shall not participate in the election campaign of any candidate for mayor or elected county executive.

Running for Office. Members shall not run for elected office or become involved in political activities related to running for elected office, or accept appointment to an elected office. They shall not seek political endorsements, financial contributions or engage in other campaign activities.

Elections. Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to vote. However, in order not to impair their effectiveness on behalf of the local governments they serve, they shall not participate in political activities to support the candidacy of individuals running for any city, county, special district, school, state or federal offices. Specifically, they shall not endorse candidates, make financial contributions, sign or circulate petitions, or participate in fund-raising activities for individuals seeking or holding elected office.

Elections relating to the Form of Government.

Members may assist in preparing and presenting materials that explain the form of government to the public prior to a form of government election. If assistance is required by another community, members may respond.

Presentation of Issues. Members may assist their governing body in the presentation of issues involved in referenda such as bond issues, annexations, and other matters that affect the government entity's operations and/or fiscal capacity.

Personal Advocacy of Issues. Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to voice their opinion on public issues. Members may advocate

for issues of personal interest only when doing so does not conflict with the performance of their official duties.

Tenet 8. Make it a duty continually to improve the member's professional ability and to develop the competence of associates in the use of management techniques.

GUIDELINES

Self-Assessment. Each member should assess his or her professional skills and abilities on a periodic basis.

Professional Development. Each member should commit at least 40 hours per year to professional development activities that are based on the practices identified by the members of ICMA.

Tenet 9. Keep the community informed on local government affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and all local government officers; emphasize friendly and courteous service to the public; and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.

Tenet 10. Resist any encroachment on professional responsibilities, believing the member should be free to carry out official policies without interference, and handle each problem without discrimination on the basis of principle and justice.

GUIDELINE

Information Sharing. The member should openly share information with the governing body while diligently carrying out the member's responsibilities as set forth in the charter or enabling legislation.

Tenet 11. Handle all matters of personnel on the basis of merit so that fairness and impartiality govern a member's decisions, pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline.

GUIDELINE

Equal Opportunity. All decisions pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline should prohibit discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, political affiliation, disability, age, or marital status.

It should be the members' personal and professional responsibility to actively recruit and hire a diverse staff throughout their organizations.

Tenet 12. Public office is a public trust. A member shall not leverage his or her position for personal gain or benefit.

GUIDELINES

Gifts. Members shall not directly or indirectly solicit, accept or receive any gift if it could reasonably be perceived or inferred that the gift was intended to influence them in the performance of their official duties; or if the gift was intended to serve as a reward for any official action on their part.

The term "Gift" includes but is not limited to services, travel, meals, gift cards, tickets, or other entertainment or hospitality. Gifts of money or loans from persons other than the local government jurisdiction pursuant to normal employment practices are not acceptable.

Members should not accept any gift that could undermine public confidence. *De minimus* gifts may be accepted in circumstances that support the execution of the member's official duties or serve a legitimate public purpose. In those cases, the member should determine a modest maximum dollar value based on guidance from the governing body or any applicable state or local law.

The guideline is not intended to apply to normal social practices, not associated with the member's official duties, where gifts are exchanged among friends, associates and relatives.

Investments in Conflict with Official Duties. Members should refrain from any investment activity which would compromise the impartial and objective performance of their duties. Members should not invest or hold any investment, directly or indirectly, in any financial business, commercial, or other private transaction that creates a conflict of

interest, in fact or appearance, with their official duties.

In the case of real estate, the use of confidential information and knowledge to further a member's personal interest is not permitted. Purchases and sales which might be interpreted as speculation for quick profit should be avoided (see the guideline on "Confidential Information"). Because personal investments may appear to influence official actions and decisions, or create the appearance of impropriety, members should disclose or dispose of such investments prior to accepting a position in a local government. Should the conflict of interest arise during employment, the member should make full disclosure and/or recuse themselves prior to any official action by the governing body that may affect such investments.

This guideline is not intended to prohibit a member from having or acquiring an interest in or deriving a benefit from any investment when the interest or benefit is due to ownership by the member or the member's family of a *de minimus* percentage of a corporation traded on a recognized stock exchange even though the corporation or its subsidiaries may do business with the local government.

Personal Relationships. In any instance where there is a conflict of interest, appearance of a conflict of interest, or personal financial gain of a member by virtue of a relationship with any individual, spouse/partner, group, agency, vendor or other entity, the member shall disclose the relationship to the organization. For example, if the member has a relative that works for a developer doing business with the local government, that fact should be disclosed.

Confidential Information. Members shall not disclose to others, or use to advance their personal interest, intellectual property, confidential information, or information that is not yet public knowledge, that has been acquired by them in the course of their official duties. Information that may be in the public domain or accessible by means of an open records request, is not confidential.

Private Employment. Members should not engage in, solicit, negotiate for, or promise to accept private employment, nor should they render services for private interests

or conduct a private business when such employment, service, or business creates a conflict with or impairs the proper discharge of their official duties.

Teaching, lecturing, writing, or consulting are typical activities that may not involve conflict of interest, or impair the proper discharge of their official duties. Prior notification of the appointing authority is appropriate in all cases of outside employment.

Representation. Members should not represent any outside interest before any agency, whether public or private, except with the authorization of or at the direction of the appointing authority they serve.

Endorsements. Members should not endorse commercial products or services by agreeing to use their photograph, endorsement, or quotation in paid or other commercial advertisements, marketing materials, social media, or other documents, whether the member is compensated or not for the member's support. Members may, however, provide verbal professional references as part of the due diligence phase of competitive process or in response to a direct inquiry.

Members may agree to endorse the following, provided they do not receive any compensation: (1) books or other publications; (2) professional development or educational services provided by nonprofit membership organizations or recognized educational institutions; (3) products and/or services in which the local government has a direct economic interest.

Members' observations, opinions, and analyses of commercial products used or tested by their local governments are appropriate and useful to the profession when included as part of professional articles and reports.

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ICMA | ethics

A stylized illustration of several women of diverse ethnicities and ages. The women are depicted from the chest up, with their faces represented by solid colors (dark brown, light brown, orange, and olive green). They have various hairstyles, including long dark curly hair, a high bun, a short blonde bob, and long brown hair. They are wearing colorful clothing in shades of blue, green, orange, and red. The background consists of large, abstract shapes in orange, green, and blue.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT:
WOMEN
IN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

WOMEN TO KNOW



The Next Generation in Local Government

If you recall, the first edition of “Women to Know: The Next Generation” was in the March 2021 *PM* special supplement, “Women Influencing Government.” Turns out, *PM* readers really enjoyed learning about the women selected, as it ended up being one of the most popular articles in 2021. So, ICMA is bringing “Women to Know” back in 2022, with a series of questions focused on each woman’s accomplishments, women who inspire them, and their very own superpowers.

These women are making an impact through their hard work, dedication, and commitment to their organization and the residents in their communities. Each were nominated by ICMA Regional Directors because of the difference they are making.

★ **Brianna L. Sunryd, MPP**
Communications Manager,
Community Participation Officer
Amherst, Massachusetts



What sparked your interest in working in local government?

A stint as a work study student during my undergraduate studies, in the same community where I now serve, really gave me that initial exposure to local government. Before that, I had been on track to join the federal government ranks. My proximity to the community impact of the programs I was working on was like nothing else I had ever experienced at the time. I hadn’t known I wanted to help build and improve communities as my profession until I got to the chance to do it. I was hooked after that. It has informed the rest of my career path since.

What is your biggest accomplishment?

I’m hopeful that my biggest accomplishment is somewhere in the future still. For now, I am extremely proud of the work I have been leading in my organization around increasing public participation and improving the civic experience for our community members through technology and design thinking. Making improvements to the quality of the community’s experience with their government is a challenging, tall order, but for me is the most rewarding. Even small system or process improvements can contribute to the bigger picture. I make it my work to discover these opportunities to bring us closer to our goals.

Tell us about a woman or women who currently inspire you.

I am a newer member of our state municipal association’s Women Leading Government committee and each time we meet I’m so motivated by the membership of this group. The women on the committee are all trailblazers in local government here in Massachusetts and are committed to elevating other women in the profession through trainings and networking opportunities. They say a rising tide lifts all boats and this group of women works hard to make opportunities for the rest of us in our field.

What would you tell young women who are just starting in the profession?

I am lucky enough to get to do a lot of work with students who aspire to work in public administration. I often tell some of these young women who are just starting out that there is no place like local government to really learn how stuff works. And I mean all the stuff! As young people in the profession, they’ll often be tasked with figuring out new technologies or researching emerging issues. This makes local government the ideal chance to become a subject matter expert on topics you may never have been exposed to. I’d emphasize that they are the next generation of change makers and how this is the best time to get started in local government, as the opportunities and needs are both ample. Lastly, I’d tell them to never apologize for their strengths, skills, or professional achievements.

What is your superpower?

I would say my superpower is empathy. I am always thinking about how a resident or staff member perceives a problem or a process from their own perspective. This is always my first step when approaching the creation of a solution or a policy. Since at the core our purpose is the public, this mindset has served me very well in centering our community members and team in everything we do as a government.

★ **Chantal C. Gaines, MPP, MUP**
Deputy City Manager
Palo Alto, California



What sparked your interest in working in local government?

I am a proud native of Flint, Michigan,

The past two years have highlighted the ongoing challenges mothers face “balancing” childcare duties and schedules as the primary caregivers. Mothers in local government are trading sleep and time with their families for the good of the families in their communities.

where I learned a lot about the importance of community and active participation to help make things better. I saw firsthand that my community in Flint was treated differently than the other surrounding cities. I noticed that many local and regional policies adopted (past and present) negatively affected Flint and the people of color living there that did not similarly impact the neighboring, mostly white, suburbs. Even as a child with few understandings of what any of that meant, I knew something wasn't right.

Since I was a very young child, I have volunteered with my mother at a nonprofit. My family has always emphasized the importance of helping others. Through leadership academies, service as a student school board member in high school, participation in Youth in Government, and many similar programs, I knew that working in some capacity in government was in my future. However, I didn't learn about municipal government until I was in graduate school, and I interned with the city of Ypsilanti (with Ed Koryzno). That is when I finally saw that a local government impacts the daily lives of individuals and has a lot of influence on issues like equity, zoning, recreation, etc. With such a great experience in Ypsilanti with an awesome team, I've been in local government ever since, being inspired by the many leaders I've had the privilege of working with.

What is your biggest accomplishment?

With the help of amazing teams, I have been fortunate to accomplish a lot in my life and career including the development and implementation of new resources in all the communities I've served. In my volunteer work, during my time on the MMANC board, I helped develop ongoing programming for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Can you tell us about an obstacle you overcame in your career?

This isn't necessarily an obstacle, but it seems noteworthy. I had the same title for 10 years, but in three very different organizations with different responsibilities in each organization. I felt that the lateral moves offered me new challenges each time and I made the

most of every opportunity. I built upon my experience and made sure I developed positive relationships with my new colleagues as I switched organizations and never assumed that the job was the same just because the title was.

Tell us about a woman or women who currently inspire you.

My mother, Janet, is always the top woman inspiration for me. She has shown me resilience, empathy, dedication, and a constant love and value of education. I'm forever grateful for all she has done for my family. In addition to my mother, I'm inspired by many women in my field and beyond.

What would you tell young women who are just starting in the profession?

Hold us accountable to help you progress in this field. As the founders of nFormation have said, “We have all been competing for a seat at the table and there is only one broken chair. Instead of competing, we can make more room at the table.” We can do this by coaching, listening, and giving back to the next generation of women and people of color in our field as we go along.

What is your superpower?

Staying calm is one of my superpowers. I do get frazzled, but on average, I think it is time wasted to overly freak out about things. I go to problem solving and empathy mode relatively quickly most of the time. I do wish I could fly...

★ **Laura Lam, MPA**
Deputy City Manager
Kalamazoo, Michigan



What sparked your interest in working in local government?

I started my career as a community organizer and believed that my greatest ability to improve the community was through the mobilization of organizations and people to fight for change. As I transitioned into a role within municipal government, I began to realize that I could have tremendous impact on my community by organizing within a city organization to be in strong partnership with its people, built on respect and meaningful engagement. I believe that local governments are uniquely positioned to create opportunities for people to have profound influence over their own lives and neighborhoods. I come to work every day with hope that we can make our city better, and I leave feeling like we are gaining some ground.

What is your biggest accomplishment?

I helped lead the effort to develop Kalamazoo's strategic vision, Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 (IK2025), through the extensive engagement of over 4,000 community members. While we developed the plan with community, I orchestrated an organizational overhaul to align our city plans, allocations, and actions with our new vision. To make public participation truly

I hadn't known I wanted to help build and improve communities as my profession until I got to the chance to do it. I was hooked after that.

meaningful, the real work begins when the planning ends and your organization can follow a clear roadmap for implementation success. The momentum behind IK2025 helped inspire the investment of nearly \$150 million from local philanthropy to make this vision a reality. We recently announced an additional \$400 million commitment over ten years toward an endowment to support community vision, like IK2025, in perpetuity.

Can you tell us about an obstacle you overcame in your career?

After working in local government for more than 20 years, I have developed a high threshold for chaos and can manage most scenarios while maintaining my sense of humor and optimistic outlook. In the two years prior to the pandemic, we faced two 100-year flood events, train derailments, a dramatic spread of a deadly mosquito-borne virus, a large-scale homeless encampment/protest, a bitter polar vortex requiring the establishment of emergency warming shelters, and multiple public controversies ranging from racist statues to imperfect candy cane decorations. Then, 2020 brought COVID-19 and intense civil unrest, followed by increased racial tension, growing distrust of government, and numerous other community challenges throughout 2021. Handling these incidents, while managing the day-to-day responsibilities of running a city, has been the greatest challenge of my career. Despite the chaos and struggles, I continue to rely on the fire in my belly to keep pushing for positive change. These experiences have provided me with tremendous motivation to better prepare our organization and leadership team to successfully navigate the unexpected.

Tell us about a woman or women who currently inspire you.

Sheryl Sculley, former city manager of Kalamazoo, Michigan and San Antonio, Texas. My father worked with Sculley while she was leading Kalamazoo, and I recall dinner conversations in which he would describe her vision, drive, and motivation, and how he would keep me updated on the evolution of her career.

I devoured her recent book, *Greedy Bastards*, and my appreciation for her and her courageous journey increased exponentially. I appreciate Sculley's approach (and discipline) to address complex, internal, structural challenges within her city organization to be more effective at supporting external community priorities.

What would you tell young women who are just starting in the profession?

First, do not wait to be invited to the table—grab a seat. When people see that you are engaged, passionate, and ready to do the work, they will

invite you back. If they don't, grab another seat and repeat.

Second, do not focus on your limitations in ability or power—it will keep you from imagining the world as it should be and stifle the inspiration needed to make it so. Start with imagining the world as if you ruled it, formulate your plan, and then come back to determine how to give your plan the best chance at success.

What is your superpower?

I like to think my superpower is my sense of humor that is still sharp and intact after 20-plus years of working in local government. Our work is exceptionally difficult, and I rely on my humor, wild hand motions, impromptu dancing, and self-deprecating stories to keep people smiling and pushing forward.

★ Taylor Lough, MPA

**Manager of Economic Development
Anna, Texas**



What sparked your interest in working in local government?

My interest in local government began like the story of Goldilocks. After a semester in Washington, D.C., the federal government felt too big. After a summer internship, state government still felt too big. Then a trip to North Carolina led by professor, mentor, and ICMA Lifetime Member Orville Powell showed me local government was just right.

What is your biggest accomplishment?

I was very proud to have celebrated my MPA graduation from the University of North Texas and then run my first marathon the following day. Fast forward almost a decade and I am grateful to serve the fast-growing city of Anna, Texas, in the Economic Development Department as we build a community. I had the opportunity to lead a cross-department team to place a \$58

million bond package for a second fire station, library and community center, and future recreation projects on the May 2021 ballot. All three propositions were approved by Anna voters.

Can you tell us about an obstacle you overcame in your career?

Our first daughter was born toward the end of 2019. As I was returning to the office, the world was shutting down. Balancing being a new mom with trying to bring business to an emerging market during a pandemic was an obstacle. As we had recently adopted

I come to work every day with hope that we can make our city better, and I leave feeling like we are gaining some ground.

Despite the chaos and struggles, I continue to rely on the fire in my belly to keep pushing for positive change.

an Economic Development Strategic Plan, we stayed true to our vision, mission, and core values. We implemented two phases of a grant program. I was continually reminded of my passion to serve the community, as well as the love I have for my family. I gave myself grace as I got to know my new daughter and my new self as a mother, and was fully transparent with my team about what was going well and what was a challenge.

Tell us about a woman or women who currently inspire you.

I have always been inspired and encouraged by the strong, grounded, professional women around me. Growing up my mother, aunts, and two sisters laid a foundation that encouraged me to speak up and work hard. My roommates and teammates playing soccer at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, taught me more about myself and the world. My peers in North Texas and most recently my beta classmates from the Texas Women's Leadership Institute encouraged and showed me the sisterhood and camaraderie that exists in the local government profession. I am grateful for the women who were "the first" in their community, region, or state, forging a path for me and the women beside and behind me.

That said, I am currently most inspired by mothers. The past two years have highlighted the ongoing challenges mothers face "balancing" childcare duties and schedules as the primary caregivers. Mothers in local government are trading sleep and time with their families for the good of the families in their communities.

What would you tell young women who are just starting in the profession?

Take time to build your network now. Reach out and get to know your peers in nearby communities. Join, attend, and participate in professional development organizations like ICMA, your state association, and regional organizations. Take advantage of training and networking opportunities so you have a strong foundation of "local govies" you can call on. The friends you meet will be there for you to bounce ideas off, vent to, share in your successes, and help you keep going.

What is your superpower?

Resilience. The word makes think of the sessions and training I've taken for preparing and planning to manage emergencies. I have always thought of myself as a planner, preferring schedules and routines to spontaneity. Resilience is defined as the "ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity," which makes me think of the superhero Elastigirl, the mom in Pixar's animated superhero film *The Incredibles*. While I wish I could reach into another room for a snack or water when I'm trapped holding a sleeping baby, I've found having mental flexibility allows

me the capacity to recover quickly when things at work or home do not go as planned. Another word to define resilience is toughness. Mental toughness is also required in public service—a profession of superheroes.

★ Tracy Baker

**Assistant City Administrator
Sevierville, Tennessee**



What sparked your interest in working in local government?

I've always been fascinated to learn and understand how government works. Our community surrounds us and it's where we invest most of our time and energy, so I've always wanted to be involved in making communities better.

What is your biggest accomplishment?

Over the years, I've received a few letters and messages from employees noting something that we've done that really impacted them or improved their situation. It all adds up. I know we're doing good things for our employees and the community.

Can you tell us about an obstacle you overcame in your career?

I was hired into a town that had just gone through a couple of rocky administrations. The expectations of success for me by the staff were almost nonexistent. I stuck with it, paid my dues, took on more responsibilities, and eventually earned my seat at the table.

Tell us about a woman or women who currently inspire you.

I'm not a parent, but I'm continually impressed by the women I work with who balance the additional responsibilities and challenges of being a mom. I hope we're getting closer to creating a workplace that's mutually beneficial to families and our community.

What would you tell young women who are just starting in the profession?

Many municipal government positions and departments are male-dominated. It can be daunting as a young professional female to come into an unfamiliar environment. Learn, ask questions, be present, and understand what contribution everyone is making, and how it all works. Knowledge is power!

What is your superpower?

As an assistant city administrator, I'm relied upon to be organized and prepared. **RM**



GETTING PERSONAL WITH SheLeadsGov

Hear from four women who are helping to move the needle for gender balance in the local government space about what SheLeadsGov has meant to them.

In ICMA's ongoing efforts toward fostering an environment for women to flourish in leadership and management roles, SheLeadsGov (icma.org/sheleadsgov) provides a multitude of resources on the challenges and triumphs of women in local government management and what necessary changes need to be made for more women to break through the proverbial glass ceiling. Bonnie Svrcek, Mysi Hall, Brooke Smith, and Summer Minnick are among the many important voices in this movement.

Bonnie Svrcek
Coordinator, Virginia Women's
Municipal Leadership Institute
Former City Manager,
Lynchburg, Virginia



What does SheLeadsGov mean to you? To me, SheLeadsGov means that "she" *finally* is recognized as an integral part of local government leadership and that ICMA has acted upon many of the recommendations made by the Task Force on Women in the Profession nearly a decade ago. (The task force was formed in 2013.)

We want to help women strengthen their confidence and leadership capacity to be future department directors, assistant managers, and chief administrative officers.

Recognizing that communities are stronger when there is inclusive leadership of every demographic is critical to our collective leadership in communities throughout the world.

How have you benefited from SheLeadsGov and gender-balance initiatives? I continue to be incredibly inspired by the success of SheLeadsGov at ICMA, the creation of the League of Women in Government, growing Women Leading Government Chapters throughout the country, Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL) "Ignite the Spark" cohort, the 16/50 Project, and the Legacy Project—all groups of mostly women interested in advancing women in local government. I have specifically been inspired by the work of these groups in creating the curriculum for the inaugural Virginia Women's Municipal Leadership Institute launching in spring 2022.

What advice do you have for women who are new to local government? Seek out women leaders in local government—both those in service and those like myself who have repurposed themselves after long careers on the front line of local government leadership. We want to help women strengthen their confidence and leadership capacity to be future department directors, assistant managers, and chief administrative officers.

Mysi Hall
President of Legacy Project
Communications and Human
Resources Generalist,
GovHR USA/GovTemps USA



What does SheLeadsGov mean to you? SheLeadsGov has been a powerful initiative to promote the achievements of women in our communities.

How have you benefited from SheLeadsGov and gender-balance initiatives? Our organization, Legacy Project, has used the SheLeadsGov hashtags and imaging as part of our monthly Member Spotlight to highlight the

Recognizing that communities are stronger when there is inclusive leadership of every demographic is critical to our collective leadership in communities throughout the world.

women in our group who have demonstrated leadership in their own communities. Our monthly newsletter shares an interview with the chosen spotlight to share their experiences with our members. We believe using the SheLeadsGov branding helps broaden the reach of our message and brings visibility to the women who are making substantial contributions to local government.

What advice do you have for women who are new to local government? Networking and professional development is an essential part of growing in your career. Get involved in the professional organizations in your field. Volunteer and meet new people who can be advocates for your career. Because everyone's experience is unique, you never know who you might be able to help along the way as well. The more you put in, the more you get out!

Summer Minnick
Deputy Executive Director,
Michigan Municipal League



What does SheLeadsGov mean to you? It's an opportunity to connect with other women and build a network of people who you can lean on through your career.

How have you benefited from SheLeadsGov and gender-balance initiatives? Professional satisfaction. Knowing our program in Michigan, and similar programs around the country, are helping women attain higher professional thresholds is one of the greatest joys in my work.

What advice do you have for women who are new to local government? Get involved in your state or regional local government organizations. It's a great way to meet other women from around the state and grow your resume with leadership opportunities.

Brooke Smith
Chapter President,
Utah Women Leading Gov
City Recorder, Murray, Utah



What does SheLeadsGov mean to you? As a member of the Utah Women Leading Government chapter, I can confirm that our combined SheLeadsGov voices matter and are making a difference in the community. Together we are shifting ideas, changing perspectives, and creating opportunities that have not been available before. With help and support from ICMA and SheLeadsGov, our small group is making a big difference. SheLeadsGov is a community where you can share ideas, opinions, and opportunities. Together, we support each other, offer advice, and celebrate personal and professional success. Your voice matters and we hope you will grow with us!

How have you benefited from SheLeadsGov and gender-balance initiatives? Knowledge is key and you can't change opinions without data and facts. The SheLeadsGov and gender-balance initiative help share vital records and data points that help start a conversation like, "Here's what we know..." and "This is how we can make it better..." SheLeadsGov and gender-balance initiatives help open doors, fix broken rungs, and shatter the glass ceiling for future growth in local government. Together we are making a difference.

What advice do you have for women who are new to local government? Working in local government has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Like any organization, we need more women to stand up, stand out, and stand tall. Every agency has room for women to lead and we hope you take the leap and climb the career ladder with us. **PM**

SheLeadsGov and gender-balance initiatives help open doors, fix broken rungs, and shatter the glass ceiling for future growth in local government.



HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE. MENTOR A VETERAN FELLOW.

“Military service members are in the people and problem-solving business. They bring diverse skill sets to the table, they are zero-risk to the host organization, and they are free of charge.”

Darrin Tangeman
City Manager
Truro, MA

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- ★ Invest in the future.

For more information about the host program visit icma.org/vlgmf.

Hiring a Veteran as Your Second-in-Command

BY MARTY HUGHES WITH
DR. JEFF DROBNEY

Local governments should welcome these experienced leaders who want to enjoy a second career in service to their community.

After almost four years without an assistant city manager, Dr. Jeff Drobney, city manager of Kennesaw, Georgia, knew it was time. He wanted to focus on succession planning and organizational management in the growing city located in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

In his search, Jeff knew he needed a “right-hand person”

Experienced veterans understand how teamwork grows out of a responsibility to one’s colleagues

with advanced leadership experience, and he found this in Marty Hughes. In 2019, Marty came to Kennesaw when he retired from the Air Force after 30 years. He served as an Air Force civil engineer, with his last two military assignments as a mission support group commander. Other military

branches will know this job as an installation or garrison commander. These jobs are the military equivalent of a city manager.

With Jeff’s extensive knowledge of local government and Marty’s distinctive military background, their CAO/ACAO partnership proved to be exactly what the city needed.

Veterans—A Natural Fit for Local Government

An increasing number of local governments are becoming aware of the unique strengths of personnel who retire from military service. People who retire from the military after 20 years or more (commonly referred to as “retirees”) typically have an exceptionally strong resume of experience, education, and unique skill sets.

Experienced veterans understand how teamwork grows out of a responsibility to one’s colleagues because military duty involves a blend of individual and group productivity, along with keen insight of “big picture” thinking.

While some people assume that military retirees, in general, may have a difficult time transitioning into a civilian career, the reality is that hiring these experienced professionals can help in many ways. What can veterans bring to the assistant/deputy position?

Taking Initiative. Retired veterans are trained to be resourceful and use good judgement, especially when a plan fails and the team must adjust to reach the goal. No other employment group has this degree of initiative and faithfulness to orders.

Respect for Following and

Improving Processes. Many local governments tend to mimic each other or have long-standing processes. Seasoned military personnel understand how to respect them. However, they also come from an environment that encourages analysis and continuous innovation and improvement.

Diversity and Inclusion. Retired military members have learned to lead and work with individuals regardless of race, gender, ethnic background, religion, and economic status. They have the sensitivity to cooperate with many different types of individuals.

Comprehensive Skills. Tested leaders have been trained on what it takes to get the job done. Traits such as effective communication, reliability, flexibility, problem-solving skills, conflict resolution, and resilience have been ingrained in veterans through their military training and experience.

The Bottom Line

Despite being among the most capable applicants to serve as an assistant/deputy, an experienced veteran might struggle, due to their military vocabulary, to convey their background and abilities in an understandable manner to those in local government. ICMA’s Coach Connect is expanding its mentoring program to support veterans. In addition, the ICMA Veterans Advisory Committee and some state associations are working harder to support those experienced leaders who want to enjoy a second career in service to their community. When a chief administrative officer has a uniquely talented second-in-command, it is an ingredient of success for the staff and community! **PM**



MARTY HUGHES

is assistant city manager of Kennesaw, Georgia. He is a retired Air Force colonel, has three master’s degrees, serves on ICMA’s Assistant CAO Advisory Committee, and is the Programs Subcommittee chair of the Veterans Advisory Committee.

DR. JEFF DROBNEY, is the city manager of Kennesaw, Georgia, and has a PhD in American History.

The Formation of an Intergovernmental Collaborative Group

Meaning collaboration to address important cross-jurisdictional issues

Port Townsend, Washington; Jefferson County, Washington; Port of Port Townsend; and Jefferson County Public Utility District #1—2021 Recipient, Program Excellence Award, Strategic Leadership and Governance (Under 10,000 Population)

The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant stresses, challenges, and disruption for local governments nationwide and exacerbated many preexisting structural vulnerabilities. Since before the pandemic, Jefferson County, Washington, has struggled with chronic poverty, depression, and suicide; lack of childcare; job instability; food insecurity; inadequate infrastructure, including broadband; and affordability and availability of quality housing. These have been amplified by underlying issues of racism, inequity, and injustice further intensified by the pandemic. Many of these issues are cross-jurisdictional and affect overlapping constituencies, but no formal mechanism existed for deep, agile, and meaningful collaboration among agencies and communities.

Recognizing that a fresh, dynamic collaboration was essential to progress—even survival—the four general-purpose local governments in the region established the Intergovernmental Collaborative Group (ICG). In addition to Jefferson County and the city of Port Townsend, they included the Port of Port Townsend and Jefferson County Public Utility District #1 (jeffcotogether.net/). ICG's success depended

on leadership from the elected officials and administrators of the four governments. The elected officials in particular found themselves in a new forum that required courage and collaboration as they made decisions about the partnership—and they stepped up to the plate. The group met more than a dozen times, all in open meetings, and sponsored dozens of community meetings.

The goal of the collaboration was to align and amplify a coordinated, courageous community response to the pandemic that would promote long-term resilience for the region. Supercharged by this new structure, individuals and organizations stepped up their commitment, creativity, and leadership to tackle the challenges to the long-term collective well-being of the communities.

The initial result was a self-forming constellation of six community groups that focused on six identified challenges and priorities: children and families, jobs and economy, broadband, food resilience, culture and events, and human services. Those groups, stewarded by the ICG, produced a unanimously adopted COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience Action Plan. The plan focuses on agreed-

upon investments in building and maintaining physical infrastructure, the fundamentals of a robust local economy, a thriving and fair society, and a healthy natural environment. The investments also include investments in social infrastructure to ensure protection of the most vulnerable and to strengthen the local democratic system.

ICG members adapted their institutions to become more collaborative and inclusive and to be ready for future challenges. Finally, they invested in strategic capacity and advocacy to ensure that they work together to advocate for their collective needs and vision.

Although the Action Plan was 100 pages long, it was action-oriented and community-generated. Projects are underway and some have already delivered positive results. Community virtual events, a collaborative website, and regular media presence have amplified the reach, message, and positive impact.

The Action Plan represented a first bold step toward community recovery and resilience—but it is a living document, meant for frequent refinement. It is

also a testament to a new way of working together that holds bright promises for the future. The ICG partners have re-committed themselves through another joint resolution, and the community groups continue their work on issues in anticipation of future funding streams and collaborative opportunities.

The Intergovernmental Collaborative group learned several lessons. First, partnerships prevail—but they can slow things down. Well-executed partnerships enable far greater progress on complex issues, but working together takes extra time and effort. The ICG challenged traditional ways of making decisions and working together, ultimately forcing a creative evolution that has proven to be more efficient, effective, and lasting.

Media attention and positive acknowledgment from regional neighbors, the state legislative delegation, and the federal congressional delegation helped cement trust in a well-organized, collaborative, and integrated government approach. As it energized us for what's possible, our best times are ahead. **PM**

Learn more about the ICMA Awards Program at icma.org/awards.

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Dr. Kemp provides national professional speaking services on current government topics. Some of these topics include state-of-the-art practices in the following dynamic and evolving fields:

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- Strategic Planning
- Town-Gown Relations
- Working with Unions

Roger Kemp's background and professional skills are highlighted on his website. Dr. Kemp was a city manager in politically, economically, socially, and ethnically diverse communities.

He has written and edited books on these subjects, and can speak on them with knowledge of the national best practices in each field. Call or e-mail Roger for more information.

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Jamie Robichaud

Deputy City Administrator
Prairie Village, Kansas
ICMA Member Since 2011

What's Rewarding About This Line of Work

Getting to see the positive and lasting impact you can make on a community, and seeing projects through from start to finish, is really the most rewarding thing.

Whether it be improving areas such as organizational efficiencies, service delivery, or customer experience; or leading the community through a long-term plan; these things are important for ensuring that the local government is operating at an exceptional level for its residents, and that's what I find so rewarding.

The Value of My ICMA Membership

I went to grad school at the University of Kansas and they immediately plug you in to the ICMA organization. It feels like a big family. It's hard to believe that there are other professions in which there is such a tight professional network of so many people that you can pick up the phone and call if you have an issue or something that you need to run by someone and get some advice on.

The Importance of SheLeadsGov

I strongly believe that the leaders in our community should represent what their community looks like, and that is gender diversity, but it's not just that. It's also racial diversity and age, religion, and other types of diversity that truly make up what the community looks like.

Breaking Down Barriers for Women in the Local Government Profession

I believe we all play a part in breaking down those barriers, and if we do nothing else in our chapter of Kansas Women Leading Government than to instill some confidence in women in our networks to go for that top job, to feel like they're ready, and know that they have a support system to help along the way, I think that's what this initiative is all about. Making sure we're supporting women and giving them the tools they need so that we can change that story and make sure that more than 20% of city managers are women in the future.

Building Resilience

I think a challenge that a lot of us face in this line of work is resilience and learning from the tough days that happen. If you are a city manager or work in local government, there are going to be some tough days occasionally. Public service, while very rewarding, can also be difficult at times.

BUILD YOUR RESILIENCE

Creating balance in the personal and professional.

In 2022, the ICMA Regional Conferences will be returning to in-person events! Dedicated to enhancing your ability to bounce-back and thrive, each regional event will offer new strategies, best practices, and creative solutions to some of the greatest challenges faced by your region.

**The dates and locations of the
2022 ICMA Regional Conferences are as follows:**

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ATLANTA, GA
MARCH 2-4

*Mountain
Plains*
IRVING, TX
MARCH 9-11

West Coast
STEVENSON, WA
MARCH 15-18
IN CONJUNCTION WITH 

Midwest
ST. LOUIS, MO
MARCH 23-25

Northeast
BOSTON, MA
APRIL 6-8



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