



ICMA

2025 MEMBERSHIP SATISFACTION SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ICMA surveyed its membership in May 2025 to assess perceptions on organizational performance and the degree to which ICMA programs, products, and services are meeting the needs of its members. Approximately 2,300 members responded to a series of closed- and open-ended questions. It is worth noting that this survey was conducted during a period of transition and uncertainty. ICMA's new executive director assumed leadership of the organization in February. At the same time, a new administration of the U.S. federal government initiated major policy changes that impacted support for local governments and organizations like ICMA.

KEY FINDINGS

- A substantial majority of ICMA members responded positively about their satisfaction with membership, ICMA's value, the quality of customer service, and intentions to retain and recommend membership. However, ratings across each of these Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have slipped in the last several years.
- Members most frequently describe ICMA as informative, supportive/helpful, and professional. The majority of members feel optimistic about ICMA's current direction.
- Content and program priorities include practical applications of artificial intelligence (AI), and innovation and leading practices in core functions of leadership and management of the local government workforce and services. In addition, members are seeking updated benchmarking data across key local government functions.
- A majority of respondents have attended at least one Annual Conference in their career. Cost, location, and timing are common barriers to Annual Conference attendance. Educational program topics/content and locations are the biggest motivators of attendance at other ICMA events.

TABLE 1 provides a summary of common themes among member comments to open-ended questions across the survey.

TABLE 1: MEMBER COMMENTS | OVERARCHING THEMES

POSITIVE SENTIMENT	NEGATIVE SENTIMENT
▪ Opportunities for professional growth as a member of ICMA ▪ Access to professional networks and networking ▪ Value of resources and publications ▪ Support during transitions	▪ Cost/ROI of ICMA membership and other association products and services ▪ Customer service challenges ▪ Difficulty with the credentialing process ▪ Perceived political leanings of ICMA ▪ Feelings of exclusivity and inaccessibility

1.0 SURVEY OVERVIEW

ICMA periodically surveys members to better understand perceptions of the association's programs, products, and services. ICMA conducted a Membership Satisfaction Survey over three weeks in May 2025. Invitations and reminders were sent via email to all members with a valid primary email address in their membership records. 13,144 emails were delivered, and 2,329 responses were received for an 18% response rate. [TABLE 2](#) provides a breakdown of survey respondents by membership type, tenure, and location. This sample is representative of ICMA's overall membership. ICMA has held constant several questions that provide longitudinal comparisons, so several places in this report reference data from previous Membership Satisfaction Surveys offered since 2018. In some cases, percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding or because respondents could select multiple options.

TABLE 2: BREAKDOWN OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Total Respondents	2,329	
Membership Type		
Full	1,344	58%
Affiliate	558	24%
Life, Retired, Honorary	335	14%
Student, Fellow, Intern	92	4%
Membership Tenure		
Up to 2 years	496	21%
3 - 5 years	403	17%
6 - 14 years	499	21%
15 - 27 years	451	19%
28 or more years	480	21%
ICMA Region		
West Coast	361	16%
Mountain Plains	494	21%
Midwest	513	22%
Southeast	618	27%
Northeast	289	12%
International	54	2%

2.0 ADJECTIVES DESCRIBING ICMA

KEY FINDING: Members most frequently describe ICMA as informative, supportive/helpful, and professional.

Members provided up to three adjectives describing their experiences with ICMA. (n=2,137; 6,228 total words/phrases submitted).

The overall most common responses, each mentioned by approximately 20% of respondents, are:

1. Informative (480)
2. Supportive/helpful (429)
3. Professional (407)

Across all respondents, most responses are positive or mixed. Approximately 13% of the 6,228 adjectives captured represent a negative sentiment. The three most common negative adjectives were distant, expensive, and frustrating. [FIGURE 1](#) illustrates the top 25 adjectives members used to describe ICMA.

FIGURE 1: TOP 25 ADJECTIVES DESCRIBING ICMA



3.0 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Over time, ICMA member satisfaction surveys have included several consistent questions enabling longitudinal comparison on these key performance indicators. This section includes comparative data from surveys going back to 2018.

KEY FINDINGS: A substantial majority of ICMA members responded positively about their satisfaction with membership, ICMA’s value, the quality of customer service, and intentions to retain and recommend membership. However, ratings across each of these KPIs have slipped in the last several years.

3.1 MEMBERSHIP SATISFACTION

TABLE 3 provides a summary of member satisfaction levels reported in 2025 and in surveys going back to 2018.

- 79% of members overall are satisfied (51%) or very satisfied (28%) with their membership.
- While a relatively small share of members is dissatisfied (5%) or very dissatisfied (1%) with their membership, overall sentiment has declined over the last several years.

TABLE 3: HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP? (n=2,326)

Survey Date	Very Satisfied or Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
June 2025	79%	28%	51%	16%	5%	1%
May 2022	83%	29%	54%	13%	3%	1%
Feb 2021	85%	46%	39%	10%	5%	1%
Feb 2020	83%	34%	49%	13%	3%	1%
Feb 2018	89%	41%	48%	8%	2%	1%

3.2 MEMBERSHIP VALUE

TABLE 4 provides a summary of membership value ratings reported in 2025 and in surveys going back to 2018.

- 77% of members overall rated their membership value as good (47%) or excellent (30%).
- Ratings on this metric are generally comparable to the last full membership survey in 2022, but overall value ratings have declined over the last several years.

TABLE 4: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE OVERALL VALUE OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP? (n=2,321)

Survey Date	Excellent or Good	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
June 2025	77%	30%	47%	16%	5%	3%
May 2022	79%	29%	50%	15%	4%	2%
Feb 2020	81%	31%	50%	13%	4%	2%
Nov 2018	88%	36%	52%	10%	2%	1%
Feb 2018	90%	34%	56%	8%	1%	0%

MEMBER SATISFACTION AND VALUE CONCERNS | KEY THEMES

- Need for renewed focus on core mission and services
- Desire for more connection between members and with the association
- Stronger advocacy for the profession/form of government
- Ensuring transparency of ethics process
- Improved relevance and value for leaders of smaller communities
- Reduce extra costs; difficult to justify return on investment
- Prioritize access to more in-depth information on innovative/leading practices
- Perceived ideology (varying interpretations of what this means, and whether ICMA has done too much or too little)

3.3 CUSTOMER SERVICE

TABLE 5 provides a summary of customer service ratings reported in 2025 and in surveys going back to 2018.

- 82% of members rated their interactions with ICMA's customer service in the last year as excellent (35%) or good (47%).
- Like the preceding key performance indicators, neutral and negative responses have increased in recent years.

TABLE 5: THINKING BACK ON ANY INTERACTIONS YOU HAD WITH ICMA OVER THE PAST YEAR, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE QUALITY OF ICMA'S CUSTOMER SERVICE? (n=1,832)

Survey Date	Excellent or Good	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
June 2025	82%	35%	47%	12%	3%	3%
May 2022	86%	37%	49%	9%	2%	2%
Feb 2020	87%	40%	47%	8%	3%	1%
Nov 2018	90%	41%	49%	8%	1%	1%
Feb 2018	93%	38%	56%	6%	1%	<1%

CUSTOMER SERVICE CONCERNS | KEY THEMES

- Slow or lack of response to inquiries
- Difficulty reaching a live person
- Limited support to member committees
- Challenges with navigating website overall, and with completing specific processes such as credentialing program updates or conference registration

3.4 MEMBERSHIP RETENTION AND RECOMMENDATION

TABLE 6 provides a summary of intentions to retain membership reported in 2025 and in surveys going back to 2018.

- 89% of members are very likely (60%) or likely (29%) to retain their membership in ICMA.
- These ratings have edged down slightly in the last several years, but not as much as satisfaction and perceived value.

TABLE 6: HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RETAIN YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN ICMA? (n=2,302)

Survey Date	Very Likely or Likely	Very Likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
June 2025	89%	60%	29%	9%	2%	1%
May 2022	90%	61%	29%	8%	2%	1%
Feb 2020	91%	60%	31%	7%	2%	<1%
Nov 2018	92%	71%	21%	6%	1%	<1%
Feb 2018	93%	68%	25%	5%	2%	<1%

Members were asked about their likelihood of recommending ICMA membership to two additional audiences. TABLE 7 summarizes responses to these questions.

- 85% would recommend ICMA membership to a person just entering the local government management profession. This level is unchanged from past iterations of this question (2022, 2020).
- 73% would recommend ICMA membership to any current local government professional that is not currently an ICMA member. This is a slight decline from the last time a similar question was asked (77%, 2022).

TABLE 7: HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RECOMMEND ICMA MEMBERSHIP?

	Very Likely or Likely	Very Likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
To Someone New to the Profession (n=2,302)	85%	56%	28%	10%	4%	1%
To a Nonmember Professional (n=2,297)	73%	40%	33%	21%	5%	2%

RETENTION AND RECOMMENDATION | SAMPLE COMMENTS

“I believe in the cause of ICMA. I believe that its goals are admirable and relevant. I also maintain membership to retain access to its vast professional network.”

“The connections and camaraderie have done more to bolster my career than anything else.”

“I don't feel like I get a lot of value from my membership, but the ICMA-CM is helpful for when I get on the job market. It is really the reason I am a member.”

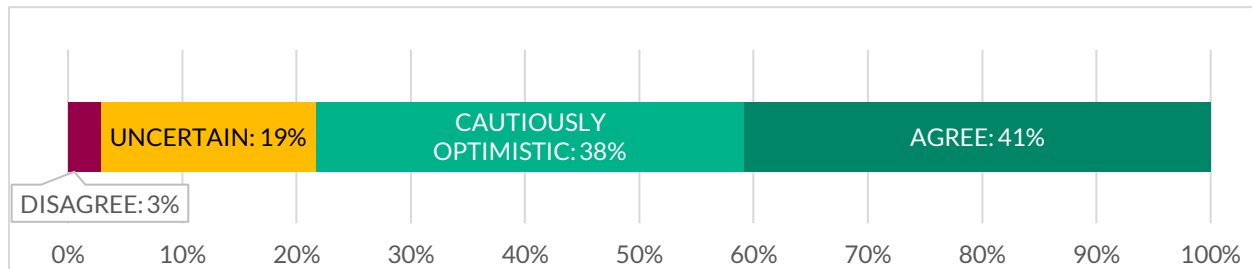
“Don't waste your money. Unless you need to attain the credentials, it is cheaper to go to the annual conference as a non-member than to pay dues and go to the conference.”

4.0 ICMA'S DIRECTION

Members were asked their level of agreement with the following statement:
ICMA is headed in the right direction. **FIGURE 2** visualizes a breakdown of responses to this question.

KEY FINDING: The majority of members (78%) feel positive about ICMA's direction. 40% agree, and 38% feel cautiously optimistic that ICMA is on the right track.

FIGURE 2: IS ICMA HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION? (N=2,288)



Open-ended comments were provided in this section. Common “wrong direction” sentiments were clustered around:

- Perceived loss of focus and mission drift
- Cost and accessibility of membership and programming
- Disillusionment with ethics handling
- Concerns about international focus

Representative positive or “right direction” themes included:

- Optimism about new leadership and renewed focus on core mission
- Appreciation of communication and outreach
- Recognition of a challenging environment

RIGHT DIRECTION | SAMPLE COMMENTS

“ICMA is headed in the right direction. Their forward-thinking leadership and commitment to strategic innovation underscore an approach that not only adapts to evolving industry challenges but also sets a benchmark for excellence. With a clear vision that integrates robust governance, proactive risk management, and collaborative stakeholder engagement, ICMA is well-positioned to drive sustainable growth and operational success.”

“I think the organization is headed in a good direction based on the recently proposed updates to ICMA's policy goals and objectives.”

“The organization is aware that some changes are needed to continue to bring in new members and retain current members. ICMA also is adapting to changes that are happening in our profession.”

"Though there have been differing opinions about ICMA in the last few years, everyone and all organizations must learn from experience, whether they were good or bad. It seems ICMA has answered the call - and is pressing forward with new perspectives."

"I appreciate how ICMA pivots with the times...COVID, social unrest, immigration, natural disasters, AI, etc."

"Every organization has its challenges. The ICMA is committed to growth and improvement where necessary. No organization can please everyone."

"ICMA, like our own organizations, are being challenged to remain versatile and relevant by being responsive to its members in a rapidly changing environment."

CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC | SAMPLE COMMENTS

"I'm eagerly awaiting the direction/vision under the new Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director."

"Federal funding cuts are concerning."

"New leadership is aware of issues and trying to address"

"ICMA needs to pivot back to basics"

"The loss of USAID is beyond comprehension - it's just cruel. I've been involved with ICMA on multiple international trips and seen the great work that was being done."

"This is a difficult time for organizations like ICMA. Grant reductions and eliminations, budget issues, and overall local government stress require a refocusing of ICMA programs."

UNCERTAIN | SAMPLE COMMENTS

"There is a lot of flux in the world at this point, and it is seeping into local government. ICMA is on the sidelines."

"I feel a bit disconnected since it's been almost 10 years since I attended a conference."

"Membership in the organization has expanded greatly and the organization has a large number of members who are not CAOs. Consequently, ICMA has had to pivot and acknowledge this significant portion (if not the majority) of its membership who have interests and needs that are critically important. The challenge I see is local government is so broad in terms of services that it has become difficult to determine where ICMA should focus its efforts and spend its time. I think there is a lot of pressure to meet the needs of professional staff, front line supervisors, division managers, department directors, and Deputy/Assistant CAOs. Yet, much of the Board remains CAOs who also have their own needs as the CAO position is different. Consequently, I am not sure where you're headed. It may be that ICMA is headed in the right direction for the majority of

its membership and the CAO needs to figure out where we fit best in an organization that has changed.”

WRONG DIRECTION | SAMPLE COMMENTS

“Need to focus on the real challenges of local governments - politics is dominating governance, lack of true strategic planning, responding to the negative residents who have the goal of bringing chaos to local government, developing future leaders for smaller communities...moving beyond the lightning rod words like transparency and engagement and move to community education and involvement...”

“It doesn't seem to be focusing on its mission, but rather branching out in too many areas in order to generate revenue for the organization.”

5.0 RESOURCES, PROGRAMMING, DATA PRIORITIES

KEY FINDINGS: Artificial intelligence, including its practical applications for local government, is a top priority for new content and programming from ICMA. Members also prioritize new content and programming, including on innovations and leading practices, in core topic areas like leadership and management of the local government workforce and services.

Members are seeking updated benchmarking data across key local government functions.

5.1 PRIORITY TOPICS

Members were asked to name up to three suggestions for topics of new information resources and programming from ICMA. 1,767 members provided nearly 5,000 suggestions. Responses were coded by topics that are not mutually exclusive. [TABLE 8](#) illustrates the priority local governance topics for ICMA suggested by members.

TABLE 8: FUTURE RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMING | PRIORITY TOPICS

	Share of respondents (n=1,767)
AI; technology; cybersecurity	28%
Budgeting, finance, alternative revenue sources	23%
Managing your workforce	20%
Civility; overcoming political polarization	19%
Thriving communities (community and economic development, economic mobility, resiliency)	17%
Leadership (including training)	16%
Council-manager relations	14%
Community engagement, social media, public meetings, transparency	14%
Federal government issues	13%
Recruiting to the profession, local government; succession planning	12%
Form of government advocacy, education	12%
Innovation and leading practices	11%
Ethics	9%
Mental health of members/managers	7%

Respondents could provide multiple suggestions; topics are not mutually exclusive.

5.2 PRIORITY DATA

Nearly 1,000 members offered ideas about data or quantitative information they would like to source from ICMA. Responses were coded by topics that are not mutually exclusive.

TABLE 9 shows the priority data members would like to see available from ICMA.

TABLE 9: DATA RESOURCES | PRIORITY TOPICS

	Share of respondents (n=972)
General performance measurement/key performance indicator benchmarking	27%
Local government employees (e.g., pay and makeup)	23%
CAO salary and contracts	22%
Fiscal metrics	16%
Service delivery	8%
Form of government	7%

Respondents could provide multiple suggestions; topics are not mutually exclusive.

6.0 CONFERENCE & EVENT PARTICIPATION

ICMA's Annual Conference is among the largest educational events for local government leaders, managers, and staff in the United States, attracting upwards of 5,000 attendees each year. Attendees of the event are asked each year to rate their experience at the conference to help ICMA improve offerings. To complement that feedback, our goal with this section of the Member Satisfaction Survey was to better understand the barriers that prevent or inhibit attendance at ICMA's Annual Conference and other events.

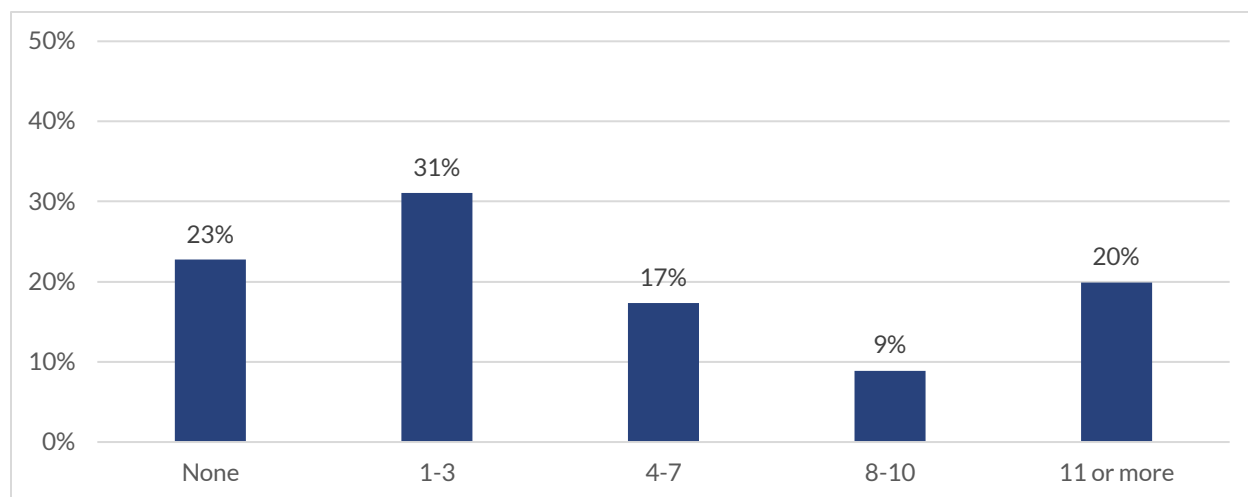
6.1 ANNUAL CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

KEY FINDING: Overall, 3 out of 4 respondents (77%) have attended at least one Annual Conference across their career.

FIGURE 3 summarizes Annual Conference attendance reported by members.

- Attendance of at least one conference is higher among full members (83%) and life, retired, honorary members (96%).
- Attendance increases with member tenure, notably after five years. 83% of responding members for more than five years have attended a conference, and 96% of responding members for more than 15 years have attended a conference.
- The most common response was 1-3 conferences.

FIGURE 3: HOW MANY OF ICMA'S ANNUAL CONFERENCES HAVE YOU ATTENDED ACROSS YOUR CAREER? (n=2,177)



KEY FINDING: Cost, location, and timing are common barriers to Annual Conference attendance.

- Among those who have not yet attended an ICMA Annual Conference, half of them cited cost as a barrier to attendance, the most common specific factor reported.
- Approximately 30% of overall survey respondents cited conference location as a barrier.
- Other common reasons cited for not attending were members being new to the association and/or their role, and the timing of the conference (e.g. conflicts with budget development).

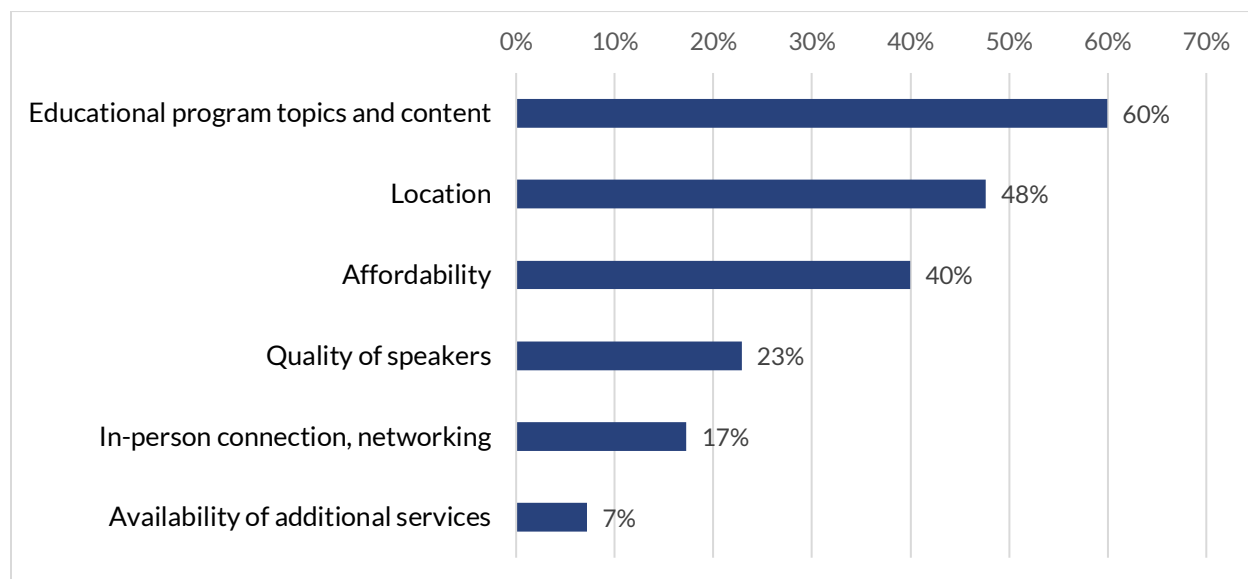
6.2 OTHER ICMA EVENTS

KEY FINDING: Educational program topics/content and locations are biggest motivators of attendance at other ICMA events.

In addition to the Annual Conference, ICMA has hosted other in-person events during the late winter and early spring that have been offered in various formats (e.g., Local Government Reimagined Conferences, Regional Conferences, Regional Summits, Best Practices Symposium, etc.). To inform future programming decisions, members were asked to identify the top two factors that would motivate their attendance at such events. Results are summarized in [FIGURE 4](#).

The biggest factors motivating members to attend other ICMA events are the educational program topics and content (reported by 60% of respondents), the location (reported by 48% of respondents), and affordability (reported by 40% of respondents).

FIGURE 4: WHAT WOULD PRIMARILY MOTIVATE YOU TO ATTEND ONE OF ICMA'S OTHER EVENTS? (SELECT UP TO TWO CHOICES, n=2,095)



7.0 FINAL THOUGHTS

ICMA regularly ends surveys with an open-ended question that allows members to express any final sentiments or comments. Most summarized or reinforced sentiments expressed across the survey. Comments provided below are representative of key themes.

7.0 FINAL THOUGHTS | SAMPLE COMMENTS

"It feels at times that ICMA has been all over the board in my 19 years as a member in terms of what it needs to be for members. This statement isn't necessarily a bad thing as ICMA has had to adapt to changing times. My hope going forward is ICMA can perhaps do a better job of anticipating what is coming next in terms of the needs of their members and be proactive in those adaptations versus what has felt like a reactive response in the past."

"ICMA is a great organization and has a lot of brand value, which is why we continue to attract members and will always have a core of active and enthusiastic participants. I love what ICMA stands for. But right now, we are basically defined by our annual conference and our code of ethics. We need to refocus on supporting our members in new ways and being more "in touch" with what's actually happening on the ground in local government right now."

"ICMA was always an important resource to me throughout my career. It has always been a source of creativity and new ideas for local government at all levels. It has also been an important networking and connection place for me as I made several moves over my career."

"Young professionals should be the people you target as members, as this ensures longevity within the organization. For that reason, the mentorship program and other resources need to be highlighted. Young professionals are the future of our local governments, and if we do not attract now, there will be a shortage of professionals in the field."

"ICMA used to be the premier organization for local governments. It can be so again if it focuses on its core mission and helps those who actually do the job."

"I have enjoyed my experiences with ICMA, particularly my early involvement in Leadership ICMA, participation in the credentialing process, and the value I've found in attending conferences. As I've progressed in my career, I've found fewer resources on the ICMA website that meet my current needs, because I've found the most valuable insight now comes through professional connections. I believe it's time to realign ICMA's direction to refocus on the foundational principles."