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Assistant City Manager
Paducah, Kentucky

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Integrity

Upholding high personal and professional **standards**

BY MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM



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The year 2020 felt like one continuous stress test on the heart of a functioning democracy. The rule of law, ability to hold free and fair elections, and obligation to provide equitable and fair public services all were put to the test. Even the norms for transparency and access to official deliberations were unended with the abrupt transition to a virtual environment.

The role of professional staff serving in government, another critical component of a functioning democracy, was also scrutinized. Notably at times when their recommendations appeared to be at odds with those of the elected officials, their purpose and value was questioned. In somewhat denigrating terms, they got dismissed as “bureaucrats” or “career professionals” as if devoting your life’s work to public service is somehow a bad thing.

We see the contributions that qualified, nonpartisan, subject matter experts make to the development of good public policy and in excellent service delivery all around us. Often under intense pressure from the public and/or elected officials, we see these professionals stay firm in their professional recommendations and resist encroachment on their role implementing policy. They demonstrate integrity in its truest sense and re-affirm again that a functioning democracy relies on their contributions.

Launching into the new year, all those who serve in local government can demonstrate by their expertise the value they contribute to a vibrant functioning democracy. But for that expertise to succeed, the public, elected officials, and other staff members need to have confidence in you. Accolades of talent and skill will be quickly neutralized if there are questions about your judgement and character. To earn that confidence and trust, you must exemplify integrity.

The Integrity Tenet

The ICMA Code of Ethics provides guidance on how professionals should perform their work with the highest of ethical standards. But when it comes to the specific topic of integrity, Tenet 3 is spot on:

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.

To strengthen your commitment to integrity, consider these components outlined in the guidelines from Tenet 3, as well as others in the ICMA Code of Ethics:



MARTHA PEREGO,
ICMA-CM, is

director of member services and ethics director, ICMA, Washington, D.C.
(mperego@icma.org).

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ICMA
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Suite 500
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EDITORIAL OFFICE:
pm@icma.org

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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.

Credibility: Do you conduct yourself in such a way that the public and your colleagues have confidence in you, your role, and your organization? Is the data, input, and recommendations you provide fair, objective, and free from bias? When making policy recommendations or operational decisions are you consistent or do you “move the goal posts” to accommodate your desired outcome? Do you exercise complete candor when mistakes happen? Mike Walker, a seasoned city manager who chaired ICMA’s Committee on Professional Conduct, perhaps said it best: “Credibility, which you get by being honest about things, is the most important asset we have going as managers. If you lose it, your effectiveness is gone—no matter how smart you are!”

Influence: Do you conduct your professional and personal affairs in a manner that demonstrates that you cannot be improperly influenced in how you do your job? Do you recognize and immediately address conflicts of interest that occur when your personal life intersects with work? Do you have an arm’s length relationship with individuals or firms that have official interactions with you? Do you resist when elected officials encroach on your responsibilities? Or are you more inclined to go along for the sake of achieving peace? On this subject, Winston Churchill’s observation rings true: “Appeasement is feeding the crocodile, hoping he will eat you last.”

Commitment: Working in the public realm requires tenacity, perseverance, and commitment. Do your homework before accepting a position. Once you accept a position, keep your word and report for duty. Do your best to commit to a professional length of service defined by the Code as two years. Longer tenures benefit both the organization and your credibility with future employers.

Competence: Regardless of your position, everyone shares the obligation to be qualified for the position they hold, remain proficient by devoting time to professional development, and to seek professional assistance if you find yourself in over your head. The harm to the public’s safety and interests caused by incompetence can be enormous.

Credentials: Whether you are competing for a new position or posting your credentials on LinkedIn, are you being honest about your education, work experience, and personal history? Accuracy matters.

Professional Respect: What do you say publicly or privately about your colleagues? If you are competing for a position, show professional respect for those who held the position, successors, 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. This can be a tough profession, so show kindness and support each other.

Personal Conduct: Your “fitness for duty” will include an assessment of whether you exercise good judgment in how you conduct your personal affairs. An intimate or romantic relationship with a subordinate employee or your boss will lead to intense inquiry about your judgement.

Civility: Even under duress, do you treat everyone fairly with dignity and respect? Do not be a bully, engage in harassment or tolerate it in your organization.

There are so many variables in this profession that affect success. Are you the right fit for the organization? Will you have a good governing body come next election? Are you fortunate to be working for an ethically grounded and talented leader? Will you weather the current storm? Truly most of these are out of your control. What can you control? Your conduct. **PM**

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ICMA Executive Director Marc Ott

Director, Equity & Social Justice and Membership Marketing Lynne Scott lscott@icma.org

Managing Editor Kerry Hansen khansen@icma.org

Newsletter Editor Kathleen Karas kkaras@icma.org

Graphics Manager Delia Jones djones@icma.org

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You Should Be *Leading* This Movement

Own your leadership and ask yourself how you can support other leaders along the way

BY CARLY LORENTZ

"Why are you leading this project?"

It was several years ago when a manager in finance asked me this question in an accusatory tone while we were meeting one-on-one about a particularly difficult project I was managing. I almost laughed because it was so rude, but my breath was sucked out of my chest for a moment.

This is not the most offensive thing that has been said to me in my career, and it doesn't even come close to microaggressions experienced by

others. But it was a particularly bad day for me, and it hurt. When I was able to breathe, I said something about my generalist background and my strategic view of the organization.

And when I walked away, I couldn't believe how well I handled it. I have been able to navigate the several times in my career when my authority, experience, and talent have been questioned (before I prove them wrong) because I am armed with a team of supporters who remind me of all my "wins" and hard work.

Imposter syndrome is well-documented and being a generalist in city management sets you up for a heavy dose. I am a woman who is often younger than the people I work with (for now) and am leading initiatives and projects that encompass topics I am not yet an expert in. Mix these things together and you have a particularly bad recipe for imposter syndrome.

I know I'm not alone in this feeling or in people pointing out that someone doesn't look or act like the leader they expected. It is very important for our city decision-makers to be diverse and reflect our communities and for that to happen we need to own our leadership and ask what we are doing to support others. Who else is getting asked "Why you?" and what can we do to support them?



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It is very important for our city decision-makers to be diverse and reflect our communities, and for that to happen we need to ask what we are doing to support others. Who else is getting asked "Why you?" and what can we do to support them?

I feel strongly there is great work to be done in equity and inclusion in local government, and I'm glad to see it front and center this year. I applaud the work that ICMA has accomplished by changing our bylaws to be more inclusive. I have enjoyed seeing CivicPRIDE grow over the last few years and have loved hearing "Stories of Pride" where LGBTQIA+ folks are sharing stories of serving their communities. I am proud of Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL) for continuing to be a leader in tracking and reporting on demographics in local government with the Diversity Dashboard (www.elgl.org/diversity-dashboard).

Working together, we can keep this momentum going and positively impact our profession. I urge you all to continue your work in striving for more equitable organizations—both ICMA and your own city or county.

For me, it takes a team, my professional organizations, my city, my parents, my partner, my friends, my kids, and my colleagues for me to feel confident in the face of challenges and detractors. I am a straight, cis, white, able-bodied female who has faced only a fraction of what others have and it takes a village. Let's all find ways to be part of someone's team, especially for people who have less privilege than ourselves. Who should you reach out to remind them why *they* are leading and why they are so valuable to their community? **PM**



CARLY LORENTZ

is deputy city manager of Golden, Colorado (clorentz@cityofgolden.net).



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GOVERNING FOR EQUITY: Implementing an Equity Lens in Local Governments

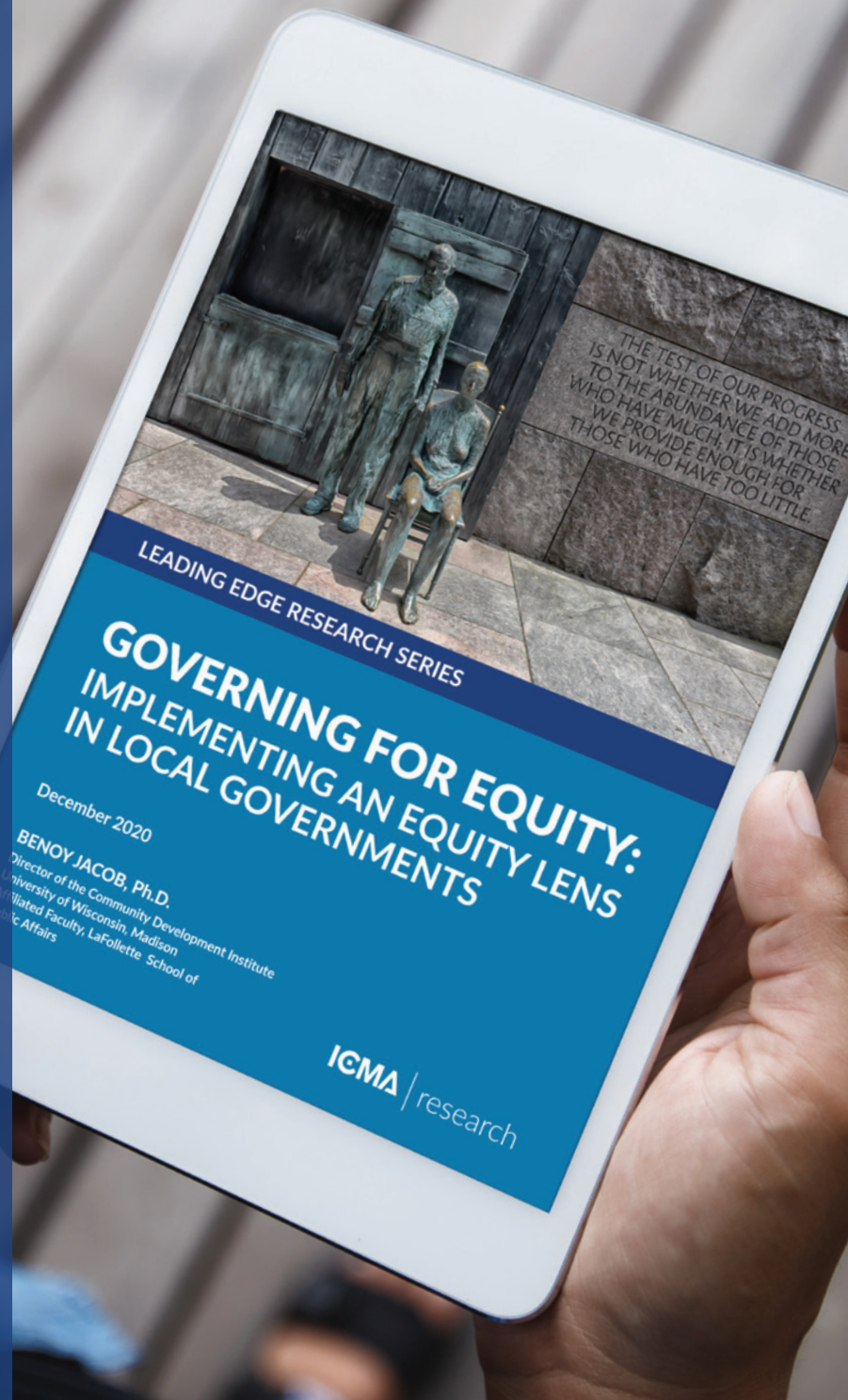
BENOY JACOB, PhD
ICMA Research Fellow

Director of the Community Development Institute, Division of Extension, and Affiliated Faculty at the LaFollette School of Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison

What's Inside

- A framework for local governments to address social and racial inequity in their communities through policies, practices, and learning.
- Perspectives from cities and counties that excel in increasing diversity and fostering inclusiveness.
- Insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by public administrators when adopting an equity lens in their day-to-day operations.

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT AT
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This report was supported through ICMA's Local Government Research Fellowship program. ICMA Research Fellows are practitioners and academics that conduct action-oriented research addressing important trends, drivers, and issues facing local governments. Their work advances ICMA's strategic priority to provide thought leadership and resources that support members and other local government stakeholders in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world. Learn more about ICMA's Local Government Research Fellowship program at [**icma.org/icma-local-government-research-fellows**](https://icma.org/icma-local-government-research-fellows).

Characters Are My People

How my **childhood** prepared me for a career in local government | BY TIM RUNDEL

Late one evening, I was sitting around a table of veteran city managers at a summer conference in Oklahoma and the subject of “growing up poor” surfaced. I sat and listened to some of the stories of my fellow city managers growing up in rural and urban settings with modest means. After listening for a while, I brought up my story about growing up in the Ozarks during the 1960s and ’70s and the challenges my parents faced raising five boys.

One of the city managers challenged me to a “who grew up the poorest” game and started rattling off some of the conditions he grew up in as the son of a

poor preacher in rural Arkansas. We traded jabs about our living conditions back and forth until I mentioned the fact that my family lived for a while in a home with no indoor plumbing. We had used an outhouse and took baths in a horse trough in the kitchen. He looked at me with a sheepish grin and said, “Okay, Tim, you win.”

We then moved on to stories about the casts of interesting characters in our small towns and how difficult it must have been for our parents to raise children in abject poverty conditions. My brothers and I stopped counting how many times we moved (we estimated 12 to 15) from one town to the other during our school years. This made it very difficult for us to establish roots and make long-term friendships. However, moving frequently taught us resilience and how to adapt quickly to a new environment.

Next month will mark the twentieth year of my career in local government. My career path was far from typical in our sphere as city managers. In the summer before my senior year in high school, I worked for the town of Mountainburg, Arkansas, through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) program. The program offered work to those with low incomes and the long-term unemployed, as well as summer jobs to low-income high school students. My job that summer was primarily clearing out bar ditches around town, picking



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My experiences as a child growing up in poverty gave me some skill sets that proved to be very valuable.

up garbage along the highway, painting faded park benches and tables, and other such tasks. Was it a job that taught me a lot of skills? No. However, it taught me how valuable my public service was to my community.

I was the first person on my father’s side of the family to graduate high school and attend college. While in college I participated in the work study program at the university’s bookstore and eventually successfully ran for vice president of our Student Government Association. After graduating from college, I bounced from job to job for a few years and eventually enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and served six years in the Oklahoma Air National Guard.

After working in the private sector for several years, I still had a burning desire to do something more fulfilling. I called my uncle in Texas who was a city manager in the Dallas area at the time to talk about serving in local government. He advised and encouraged me to get my MPA and jump into the arena of municipal management. After completing my MPA from the University of Oklahoma, I got my first gig as an assistant city manager position in a suburb of Oklahoma City, and nearly 20 years later, I am managing my second beautiful city in northern California.

Statistically, I realize that my story is not the norm in our country. I believe that the key to my advancement in municipal management is in direct correlation to my level of education. A 2015 study by the Urban Institute, “Child Poverty and Adult Success,” revealed that,



TIM RUNDEL is city manager, Weed, CA (tim.rundel@ci.weed.ca.us).

“compared with children in the most advantaged neighborhoods, children in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods are 28 percent less likely to complete high school and a staggering 99 percent less likely to complete a four-year college degree. This result is consistent with research that finds students from neighborhoods with lower incomes and educational attainment are less likely to earn bachelor’s degrees... which could result from weaker college preparation and/or fewer resources to complete college.”¹

I often joke that when I attend ICMA Annual Conferences, I rarely see any city manager name badges with the last name of Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, or Bezos. Most city managers that I have made connections with come from lower- to middle-class families that worked their way through college for a career in public service. I think too often our society gauges success stories from those who rise from poverty based on their achievements in business and the size of their portfolios. Not taking anything away from those who achieve private sector success, I just believe that measurement should also be based upon their service and commitment to their communities, states, and our nation.

Most city managers that I’ve connected with come from lower- to middle-class families that worked their way through college for a career in public service.

I love that our profession has a diverse group of individuals with the common goal of making our cities a better place to live and work. My experiences as a child growing up in poverty gave me some skill sets that proved to be very valuable. Early in my career as an assistant city manager, I was given the task of managing a community development block grant (CDBG) for a sewer line replacement in one of our lower-income neighborhoods. Part of my duties as the grants coordinator was conducting a door-to-door income survey in the neighborhood in order to qualify for the grant. I came to work one day in jeans, and when I told one of my coworkers that I was heading out to conduct the income survey, she told me to be careful because there are some “real characters” in that neighborhood. I smiled

and replied, “I’m not scared of characters. Characters are my people.” **RM**

ENDNOTE

¹ <https://studylib.net/doc/14466316/child-poverty-and-adult-success>

PROFILES OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN ACTION



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Scott Somers, ICMA-CM
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A Default to Kindness

Make **kindness** your New Year's resolution | BY PATRICK MALONE

Well, 2020 is finally in our rearview mirror. One year ago, in January, no one anticipated the way that life would change for all of us just a few short weeks later. When the pandemic arrived on our shores, it took an already divided nation to a new level of anxiety, loneliness, and fear. COVID-19 hit us all and hit us hard. Our social lives changed, the way we live and work was altered, and things that we took for granted were all of a sudden no longer part of the landscape of our lives. Our public servants felt this change more than most as they focused on delivering critical services to communities around the nation.

As we all worked to refashion our lives amid what many considered to be the new normal, we had to do so using tools that were, shall we say, less than personal. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Facetime fall woefully short in bringing us together. Yes, they serve a purpose to be sure, and for a time they were all we had. And while they remain important tools for us to use in these challenging times, they fail to fill the void of real human contact. Despite their presence, and our attempts to use them as substitutes, we all felt a little more lonely, a little more stressed, and a little more isolated as the year wore on.

And then kindness took over.

I wrote on this very subject just a few years ago, appealing to all of us to come together as human beings and acknowledge the need to move our compass toward a heading of kindness. It read in part:

It's not always easy for kindness and gratitude to make themselves known in today's world. Combine our omnipresent, hyperactive environment with a 24-hour news cycle, divisive discourse across our nation, and no time for reflection, and it's no wonder we snap at one another. Life is hard. Research has even suggested we may possess an intrinsic bias toward negativity. This has been helpful from an evolutionary standpoint. We make decisions that allow us to survive and succeed. But kindness, vulnerability, compassion, and empathy struggle to make the grade in a pressure-cooker world.



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Author, poet, and civil rights activist Maya Angelou once said, "The desire to reach the stars is ambitious. The desire to reach hearts is wise and most possible." We have a human imperative for kindness, touching others' hearts, and craving belonging. I simply don't know how to say it better.

We've made it through 2020, and maybe we evolved as a kinder nation, one that witnessed the devastating impact of the last year (it feels good to say last year!), and truly realized the importance of compassion and gratitude. As odd as it sounds, we seem closer and more caring, despite our continued dependence on virtual platforms.

And keep this in mind. One of the really amazing things about kindness is it builds on itself. Kindness begets kindness. Isn't that cool? When we observe a kind act at work or at the grocery store, we are more likely to perform a kind act based solely on the fact that we witnessed one. Research has shown us that when we perform a kind act for others, it becomes addictive. We want to do it again. And if we do a kind act for 21 consecutive days, it actually rewires the brain to default to kindness. What a nice New Year's resolution, a default to kindness! Let's make 2021 kinder than ever. **PM**



PATRICK S. MALONE, PHD, is the director of the Key Executive Leadership Programs in the School of Public Affairs at American University. He is the co-author of the upcoming book, *Leading with Love and Laughter: Letting Go and Getting Real at Work*, available May 2021. (pmalone@american.edu)

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Managing Through Tragedies

Keeping Your Career Intact and on Track

BY ROBERT L. BLAND
AND
LEWIS F. MCLAIN JR.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that community-wide tragedies—natural or technological disasters, human tragedies, or pandemics—impose a toll on the tenure of a city or county chief executive. Whether a loss of confidence, an expedient excuse, or a poor fit with the community's needs, any tragedy that disrupts the normal rhythm of community life strains working relationships among those in leadership roles.

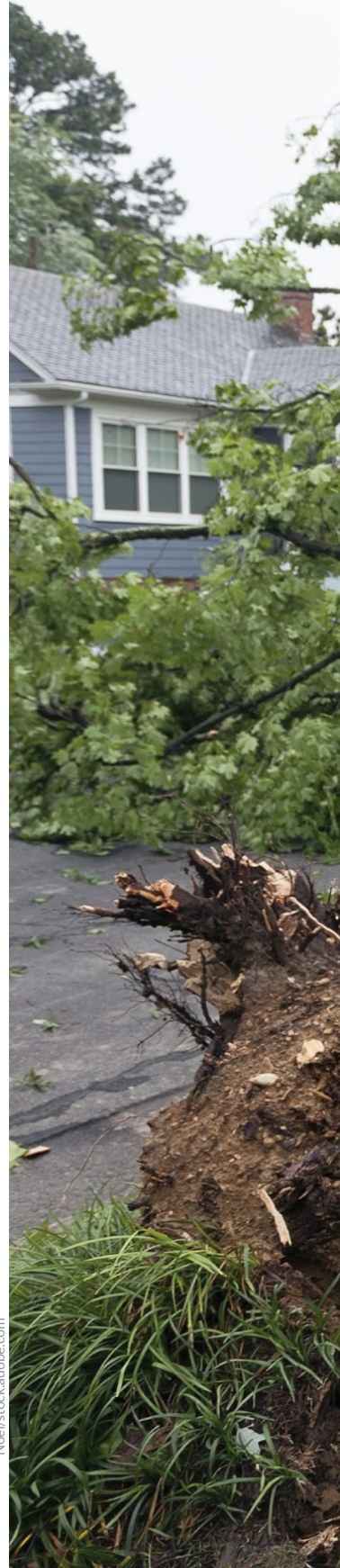
Although little has been written on the topic, we draw on the anecdotal observations and testimonies of panelists at ICMA's 2020 UNITE virtual conference and from conversations with managers to assess the impact of crises on the careers of city, town, or county executives.

Types of Community-wide Tragedies

Tragedies come in many forms; each varies in intensity, impact, and duration. Each is unique. In dealing with tragedies, however, local governments follow a similar pattern beginning with preparation and planning for a possible event, then responding once the event occurs, followed by recovering from the event, while taking ongoing measures to mitigate the impact of recurrences.

Some tragedies come with advance warnings that enable alerting residents of the imminent danger. Tsunami sirens dot the Pacific islands; phone and text notifications are now widely used to alert residents to imminent natural or technological hazards. Others, however, arise with no warning. An explosion of stored ammonium nitrate wrought death and destruction on the small town of West, Texas; a radioactive leak from a nuclear power plant turned the city of Pripjat, Ukraine, into a ghost town; a terrorist attack turned once-towering civic symbols into a national tragedy. Such events expose the vulnerabilities of a community and strain the manager's leadership skills.

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**For the manager,
human-induced tragedies
pose complex issues
involving public outrage
mixed with often
unrealistic expectations
for prevention of a
reoccurrence.**

To better understand the consequences of tragedies on public executive careers, we begin by categorizing tragedies into four types: natural disasters, human-initiated tragedies, operational tragedies, and borderless tragedies.

Natural disasters tend to be repetitive, thereby giving local governments an opportunity to gain institutional knowledge at responding to and recovering from these events. For the coastal regions or “tornado alleys,” the question is not if but when will the disaster occur? Managers in these communities likely have well-developed response plans that have been refined from table-top drills with first responders. The variation in intensity and duration of these disasters likely affect a local government’s capacity for timely response and recovery. If the disaster is more intense or destructive than in the past, residents may have unrealistic expectations for the speed of the local response and the length of time for recovery. Managing those expectations, while keeping a disaster-weary staff engaged, may exhaust the most passionate manager.

Human-initiated tragedies are usually idiosyncratic—civil violence, a police shooting, terrorist attack, mass shooting, or

an industrial accident. These events may be accidental or intentional, but all involve human action and thus are difficult to predict. The single event or even a single person becomes magnified by snippets of cell phone video that amplify the drama of the story.

Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the newly established Department of Homeland Security implemented a color-coded system to alert Americans to the perceived risk of a terrorist attack. But it proved ineffective, and in 2011, the system was replaced with

a notification using bulletins to describe the level of threat. Like natural disasters, human-induced tragedies vary in their intensity and scope. Unlike natural disasters, they are generally perceived as preventable, or at least avoidable. For the manager, these events pose more complex issues involving public outrage mixed with often unrealistic expectations for prevention of a reoccurrence.

Operational tragedies pose yet another set of challenges for the manager. A ransomware demand, malfeasance by an employee, or a protracted power outage can trigger public outrage and finger pointing. The failure may be a cost overrun of a high-profile project. Aging infrastructure is emerging as a hot topic as warnings have



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gone out of an impending crisis. Even more than human-induced tragedies, operational tragedies are perceived as preventable. They undermine a local government's credibility, possibly even its bond rating, and arm critics with evidence of a lapse in internal controls and administrative oversight.

Borderless tragedies, such as the coronavirus pandemic, pose yet another set of challenges for local governments and their chief executive. The previous types of tragedies were confined to a locality or at most a region. Pandemics have no boundaries and, as such, create unique management challenges. These events have much longer response and recovery timelines. Mitigation measures, such as social distancing and facial masks, become a point of contention, particularly for those with little trust in government. A manager's response is further limited by the actions (or inactions) of state and federal governments. The lack of a coherent and scientifically defensible plan for combatting the epidemic renders moot a local manager's efforts at mitigation. Yet their leadership remains the most visible and accessible for a frustrated, confused, and weary public.

Another borderless tragedy emerging on the international horizon is the cumulative consequences of climate change. The international scope of these borderless tragedies and the essential role of overlapping governments will place unprecedented expectations on the local manager to find solutions to global problems. Borderless tragedies demand a coordinated and coherent policy response by overlapping governments, something that the state and federal governments have not yet achieved with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whatever the national response, local governments and their executive team will have a significant role in implementing measures to reverse the adverse effects of the environmental tragedies caused by climate change. And rather than placing blame or denying the problem, our collective energy should be placed on accepting the reality of the tragedy and formulating a plausible response.

What We Know About the Impact of Tragedies

Research shows that prior experience by both the local government and its manager affect job performance.¹ A city or county that



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experiences wildfires likely has acquired both the institutional knowledge and operational capability to expedite its response to and recovery from the next fire tragedy. Some tragedies may defy experience. A public health pandemic with a global reach may overwhelm local efforts to confine the outbreak. On the other hand,

a mosquito eradication program to prevent the spread of disease depends on the timely response of a local government.

Each city, town, and county responds differently to a tragedy. That response is constrained by its financial, technological, organizational, and institutional capabilities. No amount of managerial leadership can fully compensate for these constraints. And no amount of managerial skills can substitute for past negligence in planning and preparing for a crisis. A manager's capacity to lead the community through a tragedy cannot rise much above those limitations. But as former Dallas City Manager A. C. Gonzalez observed, "These incidents are city and county management's super bowl—high stakes, lots of attention, great excitement and consternation, and an avalanche of activities."

"These incidents are city and county management's super bowl: high stakes, lots of attention, great excitement and consternation, and an avalanche of activities."

—Former Dallas City Manager
A. C. Gonzalez

Interlocal agreements and state and federal aid extend those capabilities, although that outside support comes at a price in the loss of local control over the event. As noted by City Manager Michael Kovacs at the 2020 ICMA conference, the potential for subsequent disallowance for some use of the federal aid, especially by FEMA, frequently occurs. Mary Suhm, former Dallas city manager, convinced FEMA to assign two of its auditors to assist the city in maintaining records during Hurricane Katrina, which later proved helpful in expediting FEMA's reimbursement to the city.

Research suggests that, in the case of natural disasters, better planning and preparation by local governments expedite the recovery phase.² As the response and recovery from a tragedy grind on, residents who at one time were grateful now grow increasingly



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organization's leadership must be earned before a tragedy in order to sustain the community through the crisis.

Tragedies demand extraordinary amounts of a manager's time and attention, often to the neglect of other needs, including family and personal mental and physical health. As the tragedy abates, both the manager and immediate family may be exhausted physically and emotionally. Bob Hart, city manager of Corinth, Texas, and former manager of Pampa, Texas, when in 1987 the

frustrated. A reasonable implication, although not verified by research, is that the more prolonged the recovery from a tragedy, the greater the dissatisfaction of residents. Once the recovery has been launched, it must be seen as moving steadily forward.

Communication with residents during and following a tragedy has been repeatedly found as critical to the road back to normalcy.³ Jim Prosser, former city manager of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, recommends that city/county managers "design communications from the perspective of stakeholders (of the 2008 floods), not local government.... (T)rust is the one currency we have in local government. Once lost, it is very hard to restore." Lauren Gill, recently retired town manager of Paradise, California, commented that "the most critical need is communication. Repeated, clear information to victims (of the 2018 Camp Fire) was critical."

Managing Personal Needs Through a Tragedy

No amount of planning, role playing, or investment in technology can guarantee that a community will successfully ride the storm waves of a tragedy. Nor can managers reach for failsafe measures that provide assurance that their careers will continue unscathed. The manager's top priority is to help guide the community through the response and recovery to normalcy as quickly as possible.

Tragic events reveal a community's past prudent investment in planning and preparing for a tragedy, even those that are impossible to anticipate. Unfortunately, these events also reveal past negligence in preparing for such possibilities. Deferred maintenance, poor planning or zoning practices, under-funded training of staff, and the lack of investment in equipment are revealed under a tragedy's spotlight. Inadequate funding because of a declining tax base or short-sighted demands for fiscal austerity are exposed by crises. The current manager may not be responsible for that negligence yet receives the blame when those investments were most needed.

Even more importantly is the investment by the manager in building a vibrant organizational culture, one that believes in the value of public service and works to gain community loyalty. Training for disasters—natural, human, or operational—while necessary is not sufficient. Employee loyalty and trust in the

Celanese Chemical Plant blew up, observed that managers almost always leave a position 18 to 24 months after the crisis abates, most often because of exhaustion.

Those in public service are drawn to the profession because of the opportunity to, as in the closing line of the Athenian Oath, "transmit this city not only, not less, but greater, better, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us." No profession better exemplifies those ideals than city and county management. But a tragedy brings out both the best and the worst in human nature. After having put forth the best effort to restore normalcy, there are limits to how much a manager can do to overcome the disruptions to the social and economic fabric of a community.

Termination of the manager, after having expended extraordinary effort, may lead to disillusionment, or worse, leaving the profession. The best that managers can do is prepare themselves and their families professionally and emotionally for that possibility. Speaking from personal experience, Mike Kovacs advised to "be realistic, especially if you come in as manager when the recovery has been going poorly. Know that you are part of that recovery. But also know that you may be one of its casualties."

Crises accentuate latent mistrust in a community. But that does not negate pursuing the noble cause that drew us to this profession. Crises are moments of truth for government, noted Jim Prosser. He added that standing for the ethical principles of our profession in the face of political pressure is critically important.

Managing the Organization Through a Tragedy

Managers who have prepared themselves mentally and emotionally for a crisis will likely be much better prepared to guide their community through the turbulence. Here are a few recommendations for navigating through a tragedy.

1. Not only is communication with residents key to reducing collective anxiety, but communication must also be with the staff. For the manager, the first line of support is from their staff. Clay Phillips, retired city manager of Coppell, Texas, noted, "What really saved us (following a human tragedy) is that we had invested heavily in our corporate culture definition and

Deferred maintenance, poor planning or zoning practices, under-funded training of staff, and the lack of investment in equipment are revealed under a tragedy's spotlight.

development, so we were prepared as a staff to deal with whatever came our way.”

2. Effective communication also means not over-promising results or elevating public expectations to unattainable levels. When state and federal agencies become involved, political leaders at those levels have a tendency to over-promise results, putting local officials into a difficult position if those promises are not met.
3. Roleplay a tragedy scenario with the council. In addition to explaining the technical responses, focus on the consequences of poor communications or even miscommunications. For example, the police and fire chiefs should illustrate their commands to first responders, then show how easy it is for the council-manager relationship to deteriorate. Voices should be raised; inject the realism of barked orders and damaging accusations in rapid-fire conditions.
4. Establish who is in charge in the crisis and what they are in charge of. This is much more than agreeing that the mayor, and only the mayor, is the public face and voice. It is about who is in charge of the troops—and more importantly, how are the troops going to be supported throughout the crisis. This is the quintessential moment to be candid with your governing body. Most importantly, the goal is for relationships to remain intact. Some managers report that the bond with the council became stronger after a crisis.
5. Involve the city, town, or county attorney before the crisis occurs. If an emergency order has been crafted by the attorney, enforcement then becomes an issue. This should include reviewing the rules of engagement immediately on an emergency being declared. The attorney as referee can intervene, provide counsel, and can up the odds that a crisis can be survived.
6. Early engagement of other stakeholders in the community also increases the capacity for a timely and effective response and even recovery to the tragedy. Mary Suhm noted that the investment in developing relationships with the leadership in the local chapter of the Red Cross and other organizations dedicated to emergency assistance expedited the city's response to housing 8,000 people displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Tragedies take a heavy emotional toll on a community. Engaging religious and spiritual leaders in the planning and preparation for crises of any type extends the capacity to show compassion to a hurting community.

Eventually, the questioning will surface. Why was this tragedy not anticipated? Why the missteps in the response to the tragedy? The news media retraces each email or meeting. Decisions had to be made quickly and procedures had to be expedited. Strong support from a mayor, or the equivalent in county government, will mute much of the questioning.

Nevertheless, the staff, local lawmakers, and community look to the manager for reassurance and consolation. Following the destruction of her town of 25,000 by a wildfire, Lauren Gill acknowledged that “I’m here because I showed up every day, and did my job, and pushed for recovery until on some days it hurt.” A. C. Gonzalez added that “it comes back to basics—communicating, exercising our leadership muscles, showing compassion and empathy, but being efficient. Indeed, every day is a rehearsal for that big event.”

Conclusion

This article has explored the boundaries of the impact of community-wide tragedies on the careers of managers in local government. Although not yet subjected to the rigors of scientific analysis, the perception among managers, especially in disaster prone areas, is that tragedies often shorten their tenure with a city or county.

We conclude that no amount of good management can fully compensate for past negligence by a community to prepare for the possibility of a tragedy. However, managers can build a vibrant organizational culture that promotes trust among the staff and sustains their confidence in the manager's leadership. Crises are professionally and personally exhausting. They also bring out the best in leaders. Ultimately, doing whatever it takes to meet the challenges of such events is what draws managers to this noble profession of public service. **PM**

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to express their appreciation to the five city managers who shared their experiences in navigating their communities through a crisis at ICMA's 2020 UNITE conference:

- Lauren Gill, retired town manager, Paradise, California
- A. C. Gonzalez, retired city manager, Dallas, Texas
- Michael Kovacs, city manager, Fate, Texas
- Jim Prosser, retired city manager; principal in Prosser Public Advisors, LLC
- Mary Suhm, retired city manager, Dallas, Texas

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES

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ROBERT (BOB) BLAND, PHD, is Endowed Professor of Local Government, Department of Public Administration, University of North Texas (robert.bland@unt.edu).



LEWIS F. MCLAIN JR., is a consultant, trainer, writer, analyst, and investor (lewis.mclain@outlook.com).



Today's DEPUTY/ ASSISTANT MANAGER POSITION

In 2017, the ICMA Assistant Manager Task Force began its term of service at the annual conference in San Antonio. During its service year, the task force took steps to design a toolkit framework for deputy and assistant managers and recommended that ICMA constitute a new standing advisory board for those managers to advise ICMA staff on various professional development and outreach activities.

The ICMA Advisory Board for Deputies and Assistants formed in 2019 at the annual conference in Nashville and recently submitted to ICMA a final draft of the toolkit for consideration and completion. The advisory board supports the premise that the role of deputies and assistants is critical to advancing professional administration and management of communities. Members recommended having a session during the 2020 UNITE conference that touched on becoming a deputy or assistant and how to support

One Size Fortunately Does



Victor Cardenas, ICMA-CM
Assistant City Manager
Novi, MI



Michelle Smolen
Assistant City Manager
Paducah, KY



Jennifer Cunningham
Assistant City Manager
Garden City, KS



Dianne Stoddard, ICMA-CM
Assistant City Manager
Lawrence, KS



Henry Hill III, ICMA-CM
Deputy City Manager
Frisco, TX

one. The presentation sought to explain and share resources that ICMA has created to develop and sustain assistants. Throughout the presentation, we referred to “assistants” as a catch-all title that includes deputy, assistant, and assistant-to positions for both city and county organizations.

Of course, not every organization has an assistant position, and the role is unique in those that do. Still, there are some ways to prepare for and to occupy the position effectively, regardless of whether one aspires to a chief manager role. Although we could not touch on all ideas related to this topic, we addressed several key aspects.

Assistants have varied roles.

Factors including, but not limited to, background or expertise, compatibility, interest (portfolio development), education, organizational need, single versus multiple peers, and title or hierarchy differences affect

the placement and expectations of assistants.

Assistants have wide-ranging experience.

Just as the responsibilities vary for assistants, so do the paths to these roles. This diversity of experience is valuable, as managing and sustaining communities requires diverse perspectives and expertise. No specific required track leads one to success as an assistant; however, developing and benefiting from a skillset across ICMA’s 14 core competencies through direct assignments or other training and education is beneficial. These practices for effective local government leaders are a fantastic guide for anyone in the profession.

The assistant role has common themes.

Despite differences in assistants’ paths, roles, and organizations, there are also similarities. At least six essential skills support effective role execution across the assistant position—adaptability,

creativity, deliberateness, flexibility, juggling, and resilience. Essentially, assistants wear many hats and must be forward-thinking, solution-oriented, and able to go with the flow and be prepared to do so. Assistants must have the ability to work between the chief manager and department directors while functioning between policy and operations. To that end, taking steps to care for personal wellness, especially during a pandemic, also requires the ability to perform a balancing act.

Assistants benefit from continuous professional development and volunteerism.

In addition to academic training and on-the-job experiential training, assistants and those considering the role can benefit from tapping into ICMA’s professional development, coaching, and mentoring opportunities and those of their local government affiliate groups and other leading organizations. Another great

way to prepare and succeed long-term as an assistant is by volunteering on an ICMA or state affiliate board, committee, or task force. Volunteering in this way does require a time commitment, which will vary based on assignment, but assistants do the “and-then-some.” Engaging as a professional volunteer allows for knowledge increase, honing skills, and implementing skill sets not necessarily applied in a current position while developing relationships and networking within your professional community.

Volunteering on a board, committee, or task force is a great way to network and share your expertise while building skills, gaining pertinent information, and making a valuable contribution to the profession. The committees and task forces cover a broad cross-section of issues important to ICMA and local governments in general, so be sure to watch for the Call for Volunteers this spring.

We are excited to celebrate and learn from the successes of all assistants and how we all can,

Not Fit All

BY MONICA SPELLS AND DAN WEINHEIMER,
WITH MARTY HUGHES



Laura Fitzpatrick, ICMA-CM
Deputy City Manager
Chesapeake, VA



Jerrid McKenna
Assistant to the City Manager
Santa Clarita, CA



Michael Kaigler, ICMA-CM
Assistant County Manager
Chatham, GA



Roxanne Murphy
Assistant City Manager
Valdez, AK

Marty Hughes

Assistant City Manager
Kennesaw, Georgia

My name is Marty Hughes, and I'm learning a new language. For 30 years, I served in the U.S. Air Force, and since March 2019, I have been the assistant city manager of Kennesaw, Georgia. Many people ask me, "How do you go from working at the federal government level to the local government level?" My analogy involves the use of language. For 30 years, I spoke Spanish. Now, I am learning to speak Italian. With both languages being Latin-based, there are plenty of key words to understand things, and as each day passes, my Italian gets better.

Before I get too far ahead, let me back up a little. As my military career was winding down, I started to ask myself, "What next?" Did I want a federal civilian job? What about the private sector? I based my decision to join the Air Force on serving my country and wanting a meaningful job. These beliefs did not change as I thought about my "second career."

Over the course of my Air Force career, I had the honor of having numerous mentors who guided me through challenges. Their leadership allowed me to deal with many types of people and situations. In many ways, the skills of a military member are adaptable to the "civilian world." For my next career, my mentors were retired military members, as well as business and community leaders. Obtaining advice on job opportunities and expanding my professional connections were critical to finding both personal and professional satisfaction.

When I spoke with the city manager and mayor of Kennesaw, I appreciated their desire to hire veterans, and we have been a team since day one. They readily understood the many positive attributes I bring to local



government. For example, my leadership, critical thinking, time management, organizational skills, and effective communication. Working at the local government level is where the "rubber meets the road" in our form of a representative republic.

With my new position as assistant city manager, I appreciate the fact that I can make a positive impact in my community and in my profession, just as I did for my country. I actively mentor and support those still serving in the military, as well as civilians in the greater Atlanta area. I also have the great honor to serve on the Chattahoochee Technical College Foundation Board of Directors. Education is important, whether it's on-the-job training or higher education at a technical college or university. Additionally, ICMA is full of opportunities. I serve on the Assistants/Deputies Advisory and the Veterans Advisory Boards.

To come full circle, my beliefs still haven't changed. Having served in the military and now working in local government, I am proud to serve my community in a meaningful job.

in turn, share our knowledge and stories with counterparts across ICMA. In the coming year, we look forward to our board members sharing content to help us all learn about the diversity of roles and experiences of deputies and assistants across our different and great communities.

Advisory Board

The work of the Advisory Board for Deputies and

Assistants is meant to firmly establish paths for current and aspiring assistants within ICMA. Work will focus on content and building professional development through skill-based training and experiences. The members of the advisory board are interested in hearing your ideas for future content in PM magazine, through webinars, and the regional or annual conferences. **PM**

MONICA SPELLS, MPA, ICMA-CM, is an assistant county administrator for Loudoun County, Virginia (monica.spells@loudoun.gov).



DAN WEINHEIMER, MPA, ICMA-CM CANDIDATE, is city manager for Newberg, Oregon (dan.weinheimer@newbergoregon.gov).



Monica Spells and Dan Weinheimer served on the 2017 ICMA Assistant Manager Task Force and currently serve as co-chairs for the 2019-2021 ICMA Advisory Board for Deputies and Assistants, which is comprised of talented local government professionals across ICMA's membership.



Government Finance Officers Association

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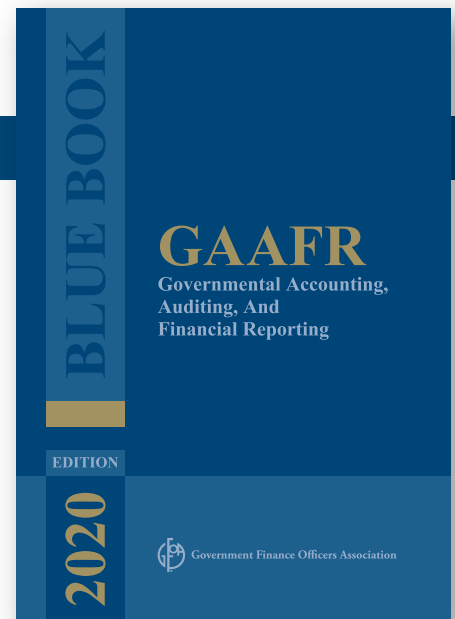
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GAAFR PLUS

Council-Manager Role Conflicts

Strategies for success to use before you accept a position and once on the job

Few issues in the elected official-manager relationship provide more challenges than the issue of role. While there is seldom a consistent and clear line separating the policy-making role from the administrative/management role, the need to generally separate these responsibilities is fundamental to the council-manager form of government. This article explores the causes for potential conflict, as well as strategies to address this issue.

This article derives from a panel discussion on this topic at the 2020 League of California Cities City Managers Department Conference. The panel, a collaboration of Cal-ICMA and the league, was one of a series of presentations since 2016 on issues identified as critical to the elected official-manager relationship in Cal-ICMA's 2015 Survival

Skills Project Report. This report was the result of an online survey and series of focus groups involving several hundred city and county managers throughout the state.

This article is the fourth in a series of articles dealing with topics of concern identified in the Survival Skills Project Report. Previous *PM* magazine articles in the series were:

**BY KEVIN
DUGGAN AND
ED SHIKADA**

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- “The Outlier” (January/February 2018)
- “How to Avoid Being Fired By (or Perhaps Because of) Department Heads” (July 2018)
- “Communicating Effectively with Elected Officials” (September 2019)

Why Is Role a Major Topic of Concern?

The entire premise of the council-manager form of government is that local governments are best served when elected officials set policy while professional staff (led by a professional manager) implement that policy. The structure is based on the philosophy that local elected officials are best positioned to represent the will of the community in regard to the overall direction of the community (the “what” of governing) while the implementation of that policy (the “how” of governing) is best implemented by trained professionals. While the concept is fairly clear, the practical application of the concept can get a lot trickier.

Characteristics of Role Conflict

A variety of circumstances can lead to a loss of clarity about roles, whether unintentional or intentional. Prior experiences or inexperience by elected officials or managers, existing personal relationships with staff, and situational stressors are just a



Семен Саливанчук/stock.adobe.com

few. Working through such issues require managers to exercise interpersonal skills, as well as the ability to diagnose underlying issues and test strategies for effectiveness.

Examples of role conflict include:

- Elected officials attempting to directly influence manager responsibilities, such as the selection or termination of staff.
- Elected officials communicating with and/or attempting to direct staff.
- Elected officials attempting to influence the content or recommendations in staff reports.
- Staff attempting to unduly influence decisions on policy issues or being unable to accept the policy direction of the elected body.

Causes for Role Conflict

The various causes of

role conflict can include the following:

- The absence of a clear structure defining the difference between policy-making and management responsibilities.

Explain to current and newly elected council members the reasons behind the council-manager form and why it is beneficial to not only the manager and staff, but also the elected officials (and ultimately, the community). Make it clear that it is not just about you attempting to protect your personal authority.

- A lack of understanding and/or appreciation of the form of government, why it is designed the way it is, and how the design should be beneficial to both elected officials and the professional staff.
- The desire of individual elected officials to exercise more direct authority over the specific provision of local government services.
- A feeling of “disconnect” between policy direction and implementation.
- A sense by one or more elected officials that they cannot sufficiently impact the direction of the organization through their policy-making role.
- Unfortunately too often, a desire for elected officials to have more power than they actually possess in their elected position.
- A lack of respect by staff of, and support for, the



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policy-making role of the elected body.

- An inability by the manager or other staff to allow the policy-making process to unfold without undue interference once the staff has had the opportunity to input the process.

Strategies for Avoiding and Addressing Role Conflict

While conflict may be furthest from a manager's mind at the moment of accepting a new position, it's a critical time for diligence and setting expectations for success with the council. Annual performance reviews are also important opportunities to ensure ongoing alignment.

Before Accepting a New Job:

- Understand the basis for the form of government

If you run into a problem, attempt to address it directly with the involved elected official. Be diplomatic, but clear, regarding the problems created by overstepping bounds.

of an organization you are considering joining. Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined and separated? Is the form of government outlined generally in state law or defined locally? Is the

delineation of role contained in resolution, ordinance, or charter? How clearly are the manager's responsibilities defined? What is the process for changing these governing criteria (by action of the council or is voter approval required)?

- Examine the actual conduct of the elected body and individual elected officials in regard to understanding and respecting the role of the manager and staff. How has the council worked with other managers? Has there been a tradition of respecting boundaries and the role of the professional manager and staff?
- Have a direct conversation with the council during the hiring process regarding their philosophy concerning the professional responsibilities of the manager.

The authors would like to thank the following ICMA members for their service on the Cal-ICMA role conflict panel during the February 2020 League of California Cities City Managers Department Conference:

- Rene Mendez, city manager, Gonzales
- Tammy Letourneau, city manager, Laguna Niguel
- Melissa Stevenson Diaz, city manager, Redwood City
- Kevin Woodhouse, city manager, Pacifica

- Incorporate the ICMA Code of Ethics in your employment agreement. The Code can often be useful in fending off inappropriate attempts to influence managerial decisions (including personnel decisions).

Once on the Job:

- Before problems arise, explain to current (if necessary) and newly elected council members the reasons behind the council-manager form and why it is beneficial to not only the manager and staff, but also the elected officials (and ultimately, the community). Make it clear that it is not just about you attempting to protect your personal authority.
- Provide resources from outside your community (i.e., ICMA, NLC, and/or your state league) that explains the rationale behind the council-manager form and its advantages.
- Make it clear how elected officials can actually get

Do your homework before accepting a new job. Once on the job, work to continually reinforce the importance and value of respecting roles and responsibilities.

- more done more quickly by working through the manager than attempting to directly influence staff.
- Work with staff to help them understand the importance of respecting roles and mutual expectations. This should include respecting the council's ultimate decision-making authority on policy matters and the need to keep the manager informed of potential incursions into the manager's areas of responsibility.

- Minimize the temptation for elected officials to get overly involved in implementation by working with staff to ensure effective follow-through on policy direction, requests for service, and complaints.
- If you run into a problem, attempt to address it directly with the involved elected official. Be diplomatic, but clear, regarding the problems created by overstepping bounds.
- Be consistent in regard to what boundaries are established and enforced. (Don't treat council members differently).
- Work to establish a unified position with the city attorney so the attorney can be an ally in helping to maintain appropriate roles.
- If a problem arises with an individual councilmember that you cannot resolve on your own, consider enlisting the assistance of another elected official (such as the mayor—if the mayor is not the problem).

Related ICMA resources on the topic of council-manager relations:

- **Making it Work: The Essentials of Council-Manager Relations**
- **First Time Administrators Handbook**
- **Senior Advisor Program:** <https://icma.org/icma-senior-advisor-program>

- If one-on-one communication is not working, consider raising the issue with the entire council (potentially in a performance evaluation closed session).

While some flexibility on the manager's part is necessarily pragmatic recognizing the lack of an absolutely clear boundary between "policy and administration," have a clear understanding regarding the boundaries you will not cross, or allow to be crossed.

In summary, do your homework before accepting a new job and then, once on the job, work to continually reinforce the importance and value of respecting roles and responsibilities. The elected officials, staff, the manager, and the community will all benefit from your principled leadership. **PM**

ED SHIKADA,

ICMA-CM, is city manager of Palo Alto, California, and serves as an ICMA Executive Board member (ed.shikada@cityofpaloalto.org).



KEVIN DUGGAN,

ICMA-CM, is an ICMA senior advisor, and former city manager of Mountain View, California (kduggan@icma.org).



Building a Better Career Path Through COACHING

A look at the coaching resources available through ICMA

We often hear of professional athletes with coaches who help them to maximize their individual and collective performance. Like those sports stars, local government managers can often achieve more when we rely on someone to help us explore our hopes and dreams and assist us in identifying the best way to move toward them.

Dr. Frank Benest, ICMA-CM, long-time ICMA member and ICMA Liaison for Next Generation Initiatives, defines coaching as “a confidential relationship typically between a senior manager and an aspiring leader that aims to help the emerging leader achieve his or her hopes and dreams. Coaching often helps one focus on accelerating career development or addressing problematic work situations.”

Coaching can help an aspiring manager, or even a seasoned manager to:

- Explore their hopes and dreams.
- Identify issues and challenges.
- Consider a variety of options.
- Learn from the relevant experiences of the coach.
- Explore resources and opportunities to grow their “dream team.”
- Receive candid feedback.
- Consider a “big leap.”

While we often see the “player/learner/aspiring manager” as the benefactor of coaching, it’s clear that this process can benefit the coach as well. The opportunity to help another professional aspire toward greater success allows the coach to:

- Share experiences and expertise with a colleague.
- Help another professional reflect and consider unappreciated opportunities.
- Provide resources and candid feedback.
- Serve as a sounding board.
- Be a part of someone’s

personal and professional development.

- Create a legacy!

The great thing about coaching is that anyone can benefit—whether you are looking for someone to listen and help you ask yourself the right questions about your career advancement, or if you are a tenured professional and wish to assist and support our next generation of local government managers. As January is National Mentoring Month, take a moment to reflect on mentors you have had throughout your career. Consider how you can help build a better career path for someone in the profession, or aspiring to be in the profession.

Would you like to find a mentor, or perhaps you are inspired to be a mentor?

Find all of ICMA’s coaching

resources at icma.org/coaching/! Highlights include:

Coaching Webinars

Each year ICMA offers six complimentary Coaching Program webinars designed to give local government professionals of all career stages the opportunity to bolster skills and learn about new and leading practices, strategies, and tactics, as well as developing issues and trends in the profession of local government management. Participation in free Coaching Program webinars qualifies for the ICMA credentialing program. You can register to attend as a group or individually, and you can also register for all of the remaining webinars of the year at one time. For information on upcoming webinars, visit icma.org/icma-coaching-program-webinars.

BY CHERYL HILVERT

CoachConnect

ICMA's CoachConnect is a program that can benefit both the aspiring manager/learner and the seasoned manager/coach. CoachConnect sessions can take on many forms. Some are casual, informal networking and check-ins. Other pairs set up a more formal relationship and continue over time. You also may choose to get perspectives from more than one coach. For more information or to join CoachConnect, visit icma.org/1-1-coaching.

Career Compass

ICMA's Career Compass is a monthly column focused on career issues for local government professional staff. Produced by Dr. Frank Benest, this free content covers a variety of topics, including such articles as "Reimagining Leadership," "Coaching and Networking," "Workplace Culture," "Getting the Job," "Advancing Your Career," and "Professional Development." For more

information on Career Compass, or to subscribe to receive it in your inbox, visit icma.org/career-compass.

Speed Coaching

At each in-person annual conference, ICMA holds a fun, fast-paced speed coaching event. During this event, coaches provide quick informal sessions on career and resume tips designed to introduce learners to a variety of coaches and their styles, build relationships, and make introductions for conference attendees. Many state coaching partners also hold speed coaching events in their states, as have some ICMA student chapters. Speed coaching is great for state association conferences, professional gatherings, and gatherings of local area managers. Check out our guidelines at icma.org/documents/speed-coaching-guidelines-and-feedback-form.

In all its forms, coaching can be extremely beneficial to your

career and helping to define its path—or even just the next step. And for those in a position to serve as a coach, there's nothing more rewarding than knowing you've helped a burgeoning local government leader on their way to success. If you haven't already, make 2021 the year you take advantage of these great opportunities! **PM**

CHERYL HILVERT, ICMA-CM, serves

as Midwest regional director for ICMA. She previously served as Midwest regional vice president on the ICMA Executive Board. She has served for more than 31 years as a local government manager. (chilvert@icma.org)





Being a Local Government Management Fellow

BY AISHWARYA (ASH) KUMAR



In 2016, I graduated from the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology University in India with an undergraduate degree in urban planning. I chose urban governance patterns in small cities of India as my thesis topic during the final semester of my undergraduate studies. Comparing the Indian cities with benchmark cities¹ identified by KPMG made me curious to learn more about local governance practices in other countries. Upon graduation, I pursued a graduate degree in public administration from the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public

and International Affairs (GSPIA) to continue my research at GSPIA's Center for Metropolitan Studies and to earn a minor in governance and international public management. Interning for the Quaker Valley Council of Governments (QVCOG) through the Local Government Academy's Municipal Intern Program taught me more about local government management practices in the United States and allowed me to hone my geographic information system skills.

Hear from a recent LGMF alum on her rewarding Fellowship, along with her advice to potential Fellows and hosts

Enter ICMA

In 2018, I had the opportunity to attend my first ICMA Annual Conference in San Antonio, and the experience provided me with great resources and connections. With the support of my professors and colleagues, I co-founded the first ICMA student chapter at the University of Pittsburgh.

Through the networking opportunities, I found out about the Local Government Management Fellowship program. The program was attractive to me because it places recent graduates in full-time management-track local government positions. Additionally, the prospect of being mentored by a senior government leader at the host organization presented an ideal opportunity.

Reviewing the work plans provided by the host cities and researching the organizations' websites helped me prepare for any potential interviews. When I received an email with an invitation to participate in a phone interview with Decatur, Georgia, I tried my best to calm my nerves, as I found out that I would be interviewed by the city manager, assistant

city manager, and city clerk, who are highly respected in the local government field. Learning that Decatur had hosted Fellows in the past and reviewing the nature of projects listed in the work plan made Decatur my top choice. Following an in-person interview, I was selected for the position and I moved from Pennsylvania to Georgia in 2018. I have been able to work on projects related to incident response planning, municipal benchmarking, and property damage revenue recovery services, to name a few.

From Theory to Practice

In fall 2018, over 200 electric scooters (e-scooters or motorized mobility devices) arrived within the city limits without any notice. The former city manager asked me to research regulations around such devices in the United States. The initial research turned into the creation of a steering committee with a focus on regulating the usage of e-scooters. I had the honor of leading the committee while collaborating with city staff from all departments, the city attorney,

representatives of e-scooter companies, the Georgia Municipal Association, and various other stakeholders. From facilitating community input opportunities to drafting and implementing an ordinance, this project helped me establish a strong connection between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences.

My two-year fellowship also included rotations in each department. Learning about the services provided by the city made me even more passionate about serving the community. An interest in learning more about the functions of the human resources division and a staffing shortage led me to work on recruitment and benefits for over 12 months. My experience in the division helped me realize that while all the departments come together to support the organization function as one well-oiled machine, we are only as good as the individuals that we recruit, train, and mentor, and the teams we build. I also got to see the impact of the wellness initiatives on health care costs while learning about the management of a self-funded plan.





My Advice for Current and Future Fellows

1. **Find your mentors.** Being mentored by the current and former city managers, deputy city manager, assistant city manager over administrative services, city clerk, and finance director has helped me grow personally and professionally. Even years later, my internship supervisor from QVCOG is still a mentor to me.
2. **Make professional development a priority.** Being a part of ICMA's Emerging Leaders Development Program Class of 2021 has been instrumental in connecting me with early career professionals and local government gurus across the country. Attending the ICMA Annual Conference helped me reconnect with representatives from the Urban Management Centre, ICMA's anchor organization in South Asia, based in India.
3. **Engage with the community.** As a native of India, a great way to learn about my new local cultural norms and practices has been to engage with the residents and my colleagues. From enjoying Halloween with the city manager and her family to celebrating Holi, the festival of colors, at a local park, each experience has been filled with excitement.
4. **Learn to be flexible.** I have been showered with opportunities that were not a part of the original work plan for my Fellowship. Saying yes to such learning experiences has helped me build relationships and challenge myself.

5. Stay connected with your Local Government

Management Fellowship cohort. The monthly calls during the first year of my Fellowship were crucial as I could rely on my colleagues for information from their community/organization, learn about the projects being handled by others, and be there to offer assistance.

6. **Have fun while you learn.** Hosting events for employees, participating in interdepartmental teams, volunteering at the events hosted by the city, and working out at the fire department has helped me reflect on my actions and goals while having a good time!



Participating in the city commission meetings and interacting with the commissioners has been a great way to learn more about the Council-Manager form of government firsthand.

7. **Remember that this is not an internship.** As an early career professional, I feel proud to use my entire job title and talk about the plethora of experience one can gain through the Local Government Management Fellowship. This experience has been truly rewarding and eye-opening.

Ideas for Managers Considering Hosting a Fellow

1. **Hire a Fellow.** Participating in the LGMF program demonstrates your community's commitment to the profession. Most graduates join the program to get their feet wet, learn about, and begin careers in local government management.
2. **Encourage the Fellow to check in with you.** Setting regular meetings with my manager helped me set work goals and understand her expectations of me. Additionally, I reached out to her if there were meetings or events of interest to me on her Microsoft Outlook calendar to ask if I could join her. Checking in with my manager over a cup of coffee (or chai latte) or over lunch

to know which projects I would be involved in! Moreover, participating in the city commission meetings and interacting with the commissioners has been a great way to learn more about the council-manager form of government firsthand.

4. **Invest in the Fellow's education and training.** ICMA offers complimentary membership and registration to the annual and regional conferences for Fellows. Encouraging your Fellow to attend such conferences, along with other programs that interest them, is a great way to support their development. Membership in the state-based municipal association has also led to fruitful collaborations and findings for me.

5. **Flexibility is the key.** We all know that every new day in our field comes with a different set of awesome challenges. Involve your Fellow in different projects while reminding them that you expect them to stay accountable to the previous ones and define the timeline for the potential outcome(s). The work plan offered a great starting point, but based on the needs of our dynamic organization and my interests, my manager and I have been able to make the needed adjustments.

6. **You are not alone.** The beauty of our professional network is that we've got each other's backs! Reach out to other communities and former Fellows to identify the best way to move forward with hiring and supporting your Fellow. You can also partner with another local government entity to hire a Fellow together. To learn where some of the other Fellows are based, visit icma.org/lgmf-alumni.

The LGMF is truly an amazing experience, and I highly recommend it to recent MPA/MPP graduates looking for their first big step into the world of local government. And for city/county managers considering hiring a Fellow, thank you! Creating an opportunity to

mentor and grow talent for the profession will provide a life-changing opportunity for a very deserving future leader—and bring a fresh perspective to your organization. It's a win-win! **PM**

ENDNOTE

¹ <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2017/10/benchmarking-city-services.pdf>

AISHWARYA (ASH) KUMAR is operations analyst of Decatur, Georgia, where she served as a Local Government Management Fellow (2018–2020).



helped us discuss professional achievements and identify next steps without being restricted to the four walls of the office while also supporting local businesses.

3. **Explain the role of the Fellow to staff and council/commission.** This is an important one. If your community has never hosted a Fellow before, consider sharing the work plan or job description with your colleagues. Since Decatur had hosted Local Government Management Fellows in the past, it was easier for me to explain my job responsibilities to others. When I first started, several staff members and elected officials were curious

Leadership in Local Government, Part 1:

What Is Leadership? WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE LEADER?

Part 1 of our new series on leadership

BY ED EVERETT

Effective leaders are the lifeblood of an organization, regardless of their position. Poor leaders kill organizations, especially when they are in top positions. Our profession needs effective leaders, now more than ever.

What Is Leadership?

Leadership is the *art of influencing and encouraging others to help move an organization, community, or nation to a better place*. The “better place” can be defined in terms of economics, environment, equality, or any set of values or principles. Leaders can never lead by themselves; rather, they must convince others to help them achieve their goals.

Leadership is derived from two different forms, both of which can be used successfully.

1. Vertical Leadership:

Vertical leadership is influence that is based on organizational hierarchy, power, control, or titles where one’s leadership is enhanced by the authoritative power of the organization. A title designates a “boss”; however, a title does not necessarily make a boss a leader.

2. Horizontal Leadership:

Horizontal influence is based on empowerment, collaboration, vision, and/or purpose and values. It is all

about the ability of a person to influence and persuade others rather than using position power and authority to gain compliance. This type of leader does not need a title to be a leader.

These two forms of leadership are not mutually exclusive. Great leaders, even if they have organizational power and authority, rely extensively on the use of the horizontal attributes of leadership.

Who Is a Leader?

Anyone who wants to be a leader can be a leader, regardless of position or title. People wanting to be a leader or improve their leadership skills should recognize that:

- The boss is not always a leader.
- Titles do not make leaders.





Leadership is the art of influencing and encouraging others to help move an organization, community, or nation to a better place.”

- Authority does not necessarily convey leadership.
- Leaders do not need a title.
- It is easier for a leader to have a title and organizational power, but it is not essential.

Below is a list of exceptional historical leaders without formal power:

- Cesar Chavez successfully organized the farm workers in California without any organizational power.
- Mahatma Gandhi was able to lead India to freedom from British rule without a title.
- Martin Luther King Jr. led a national civil rights movement with the title of pastor and president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.
- Malala Yousafzai, a young girl from Afghanistan, was able to direct the world's attention to the power of education for girls.
- Students from Parkland High School brought national attention to gun violence in schools.
- The Black Lives Matter movement is being led by many individuals without titles or organizational power.

The two common threads for all of these leaders are (1) a deep passion for an issue or a cause, and (2) the courage to act on their passion.

Leaders with position power must be careful not to overuse or abuse that power. Effective leaders rely much more on the attributes of horizontal leadership than vertical leadership. The only exception would be in times of crises or disasters.

Most people don't know they can be a leader until they try. Anyone can be a leader, even if it feels impossible or overwhelming. If you attempt to lead from a lower level in your organization, then you might have less influence initially. However, leaders usually rise within an organization (except in toxic organizations) and become more powerful and influential. Most leaders start small and build their leadership.

Do you want to be a leader? Leadership is a personal journey and not a prescribed course. Find your passion and act courageously!

Leadership Myths

Many people assume they cannot be a leader because of the great number of leadership myths that discourage them. Myths are commonly held

beliefs that go unchallenged and become accepted truths. These unchallenged beliefs have a powerful force on our thinking and actions.

Below is a short list of false and inaccurate beliefs about leadership that cause many people to fail to explore their leadership potential.

- Leaders are the smartest, most creative, or most powerful people in the room.
- Leaders are born not made.
- Leaders don't make mistakes or fail.
- Leaders know the answers to most problems.
- Leaders don't have weaknesses or fears.
- Leaders have the most education.
- Leaders are always outgoing and extroverted.
- All bosses are leaders.

Leadership is an art, not a science. When I train leadership, I ask participants to identify the five most important attributes of a leader. After everyone has shared their list, we end up with approximately 15 or 20 attributes. Below is my list of the top five leadership traits in no particular order.

1. Passionate.
2. Courageous.
3. Confident.
4. Caring/Trusting.
5. Value-driven.

Please note that none of these traits are technical skills. Leaders are not effective because they are good at finance or planning or public works. Effective leaders understand the art of leadership.

It is equally important to explore the top five traits of a poor or ineffective leader. We have all encountered poor leaders and vividly remember their negative traits. Below is my list of the worst traits of an ineffective or toxic leader.

1. Micromanager.
2. Risk-averse.
3. Fearful.
4. Authoritarian.
5. Lack of confidence.

Exercise

As your first exercise, identify your top five traits of a successful leader and your top five traits of a poor leader. The identification of these traits will help you focus your leadership development.

Summary

A keen understanding of leadership and leaders is essential for all new and developing leaders. This understanding provides a foundation for the next articles that will challenge you to think differently about leadership.

Coming next month: "Leaders Know Themselves." Great leaders have a keen understanding of both their strengths and weaknesses. **PM**

ED EVERETT,

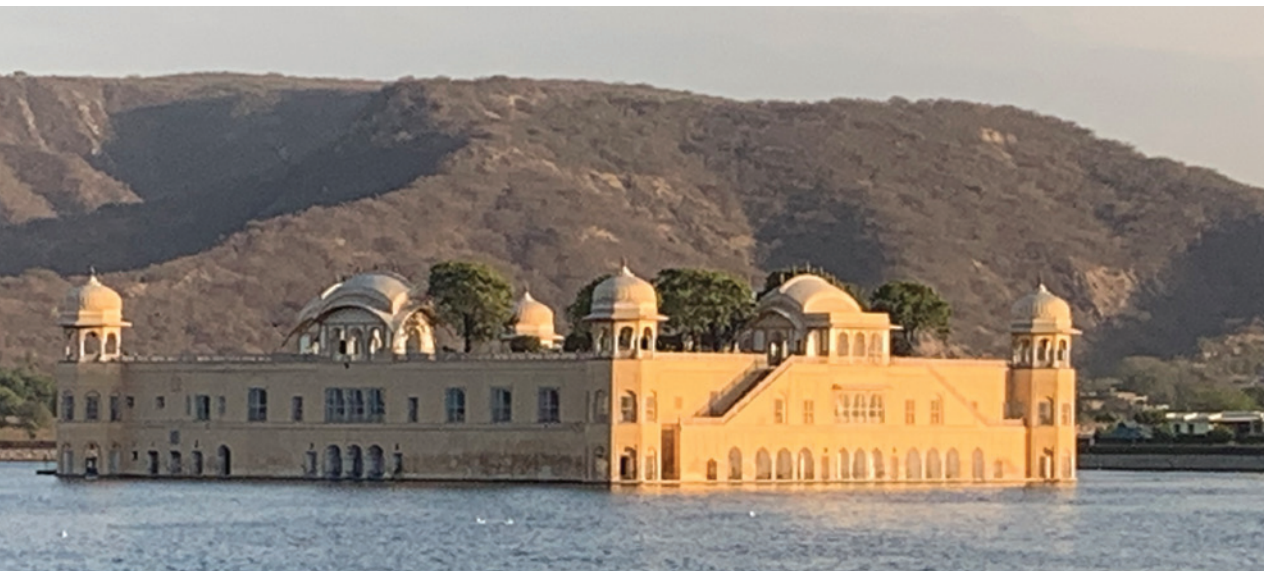
ICMA-CM, is a consultant and former city manager, Redwood City, California, and a recipient of ICMA's award for career excellence in 2007 (everetted@comcast.net).



Career Enrichment through ICMA's **Global PROGRAMS**

**Professional and personal growth by
“thinking globally and acting locally”**

**BY CHRISTOPHER
GERRY**



Nearly three years ago, I submitted an ICMA scholarship application for an opportunity to travel to an international conference. I could have never imagined the onset of adventures and learning experiences that would follow.

I would like to share my international experiences with various ICMA global programs over the last few years, and more importantly, the transformative impact of these opportunities. As I continually reiterate to my colleagues, participating in these global programs has provided some of the most professionally and personally rewarding experiences of my life.



International Opportunities

John Garvey Scholarship (Tel Aviv, Israel)

As the world continues to grow smaller through globalization, ICMA displays its leadership and vision by subscribing to the credo “thinking globally, acting locally.” Accordingly, the ICMA International Committee and its various affiliate organizations convene annually to promote professional exchanges and contribute to the international knowledge base.

In February 2018, I received the John Garvey Scholarship to travel to the ICMA International Regional Conference in Tel Aviv, Israel. This scholarship opportunity exposes young professionals to international experiences in local government by allowing them to attend events abroad. The conference included visiting and collaborating with numerous jurisdictions across Israel, attending a conference on smart cities and cybersecurity, and various cultural learning experiences in Jerusalem and other cities.



2019 ICMA International Regional Conference (Timisoara, Romania)

In April 2019, I attended the ICMA International Regional Conference in Timisoara, Romania. While attending the conference, I participated in the affiliate meeting to hear about issues facing our international partners. During this meeting, the executive director of the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities, Abdallah Anati, made a comment regarding ICMA publications; specifically, the overabundance of publications make it difficult to identify the most pertinent materials, and translating materials in Arabic is cost prohibitive. Finally, he stated that ICMA publications might need to be slightly revised for administrative relevance.





Subsequently, Mr. Anati and I became acquainted during the conference. Although we live two worlds apart geographically and culturally, we both share a strong commitment to local government and its ability to raise the standard of living in our communities. Essentially, we share a commitment to enriching the human condition.

Following the conference, we have been developing a pilot program to revise and translate selected ICMA publications from English into Arabic, specifically for the dissemination to all Palestinian local authorities (more than 400 municipalities and village councils). Key stakeholders committed to the Arabic Publication Pilot Program include ICMA, the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA), and educational institutions.



Tranter-Leong Fellowship (India and Palestine)

ICMA established the Tranter-Leong Fellowship to encourage members to expand their international horizons. The fellowship aims to enhance the professional development of the member, further the local government management profession and encourage ICMA membership and international affiliate relationships.

In February 2020, I received the Tranter-Leong Fellowship





to continue pursuing the Arabic Publication Pilot Program. Accordingly, I first attended the five-day 2020 ICMA International Conference in Jaipur, India. The purpose of the experience was to present the pilot program, provide a status update to the International Committee, and seek valuable feedback throughout the conference from committee members, ICMA staff, and affiliates. Furthermore, it was important to me to thank everyone for their acceptance and encouragement of mid-level career professionals (like myself) at these conferences.

Following the conference in India, I traveled to Palestine for one week to continue developing the Arabic Publication Pilot Program. The fellowship included

conducting fieldwork and meeting with various local authorities to understand their challenges and opportunities in delivering public services. The local authorities I visited include Ramallah, Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Qalqilya, and Nablus. In addition, I met with faculty in the Department of Public Administration at Birzeit University to discuss potential

ways to partner in the future. Faculty were excited about the opportunity connecting theory and practice, but most importantly, because the publication materials can help train the next generation of public administrators across Palestine.

Volunteer Work (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

The fellowship leveraged a volunteer opportunity in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. With a population of around 113 million, there are an estimated 4.5 million orphaned or abandoned children in this country. The reasons are complicated, but include the ravaging effects of AIDS/HIV and crippling poverty that forces parents to abandon children they cannot afford to raise.



I arranged to visit the nonprofit agency, Selamta Family Project, which creates forever homes for these children. Thanks to the generous staff at the city of Palm Desert, we fundraised \$1,000 for necessities such as hygiene products, shoes, over-the-counter medication, and a topnotch blood pressure monitor. My conference colleagues also conducted a last-minute raid of their hotel rooms for leftover and unopened hygiene products! Again, this opportunity is not possible without the Tranter-Leong Fellowship. If interested in donating to the Selamta Family Project, please visit selamtafamilyproject.org.

Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Program

Unrelated to the global opportunities described, ICMA also coordinates the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Program. The YSEALI Program creates learning opportunities focused on climate adaptation and sustainability for young professionals from Southeast Asia. Selected young professionals from abroad receive six-week fellowships and visit hosting local jurisdictions in America. A limited number of host jurisdictions may also receive two-week reciprocal visits to their YSEALI recipients' home country in Southeast Asia.

In October 2019, my employing jurisdiction (Palm Desert, California) was supportive of hosting a YSEALI recipient in our community. Therefore, my family and I personally hosted at our home Ms. Slaitip Subhanka (also known as Tony) during her fellowship experience. Tony





desired to study alternative energy, particularly solar, to reduce coal-fired plants in Southern Thailand. She is the co-founder of a successful nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing solar within her region.

During Tony's experience, we spent most of our time meeting with agencies that directly correlate to her community challenge of increasing alternative energy in Southern Thailand. Learning experiences included meeting with public utility companies, regional planning agencies, solar companies, educational institutions, and nonprofit agencies dedicated to sustainability. We also toured wind and solar farms in Southern California.

The program provides a diversity of mutual learning experiences as well. Not only was this an excellent opportunity for Tony, but I became well versed in various subfields of sustainability. I now have a better understanding of energy production and conservation.

Furthermore, this opportunity enhanced my professional network by introducing me to various stakeholders and resources in the field of sustainability. The program also provided a wonderful cultural experience for my family, including my

wife and two young children. We treated Tony like family throughout the experience, and likewise she appreciated living and exchanging cultural norms with my family up close and personal. Beyond learning opportunities, the program creates lifelong friendships.

Personal and Professional Growth

These recent ICMA experiences have resulted in some of the most exciting and meaningful public service opportunities over my career. Professionally, these experiences have helped me address my own community's challenges and identify opportunities through different lenses. Personally, these opportunities ignite an entirely different fire inside me from a public service and humanitarian perspective. If interested in these types of learning opportunities, please consider the following:

1. **Remain Active.** My involvement in ICMA was mostly passive early in my career until about three years ago when I stumbled upon a scholarship opportunity. Like many things in life, you must become actively involved to truly find unique and enriching opportunities. Remain attentive to ICMA's

learning opportunities by attending conferences and participating in programs and other opportunities that connect you to its broad membership base. For managers, please encourage your staff to participate; managerial encouragement can make a tremendous difference in a career.

2. Leverage Opportunities.

I could have attended the international conference (on scholarship) and reverted again to a passive membership in ICMA; however, I am choosing to leverage these opportunities in a more meaningful way. Find opportunities and continually see where they can take you in life. I can assure you I am just getting started.

3. Listen.

The greatest lessons I have learned during these international experiences have occurred simply from listening. While the formal conference presentations and meetings are superb, I have found the informal conversations to be invaluable. As a mid-career professional, I have learned more about city management from just listening to my colleagues on extended bus rides, evening dinners among friends, and supplemental travel together.

Interested in Global Programs?

I have found myself at an exciting time in my life and career lately. It is amazing how receptive people are in this world when you are willing to help for the right reasons and without any financial motives.



And seriously, how many can say they have met with the city manager of Bethlehem in his office overlooking the Church of the Nativity? I greatly encourage you to seek out global opportunities and see what's out there for you and your career. **PM**

CHRISTOPHER GERRY

is a management analyst in the city manager's office of Palm Desert, California. He is currently working on his PhD in public administration and policy at Old Dominion University.



If you desire to actively partner on making a difference internationally, please contact me directly at cgerr002@odu.edu.

Learn more about these and other ICMA opportunities through the following resources:

John Garvey Scholarship
icma.org/john-garvey-scholarship-fund

Tranter-Leong Fellowship
<https://icma.org/tranter-leong-fellowship>

Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Program
icma.org/programs-and-projects/yseali-professional-fellows-program

Goodbye 2020, Hello 2021

Planning a strong rebound for the year ahead

It's that time of year again—time to reflect and start anew. So much has happened in the last 12 months. In 2020, we were challenged and stretched to the limit. Like the well-known saying, “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” how can we come out of this strong and rebound in 2021?

| BY KEL WANG |

2021

One popular view is that knowing more about unknowns helps plan in advance and address risks and potential issues. I am sure you have had enough exposure to such topics recently: reimagining the post-pandemic workforce, understanding the evolving community needs, digitalizing services, or the transition from response to recovery for your organization. All of these focus on what has changed or is changing. What is usually missing in these discussions is the importance of clarifying and even strengthening some of what remains unchanged. They are the pivot points for making a turn and the foundation for change. I would like to share a few of my thoughts, as you ponder yours:

1. Stick to the Core

Do you even have time to consider your organizational purpose these days? The urgency to respond in the moment has made it easy to overlook the meaning of our work in the longer term. Does the organizational purpose (mission, vision, and value) captured in your strategic plan stand the test of the crisis? If your answer is no, it's probably a good time to update them. They are supposed to be the "North Star" that guides people in times of uncertainty and chaos.

What could and should change in your strategic plan is the path (strategies) and milestones (goals)—how you deliver your organizational purpose. It is quite likely that the conditions and assumptions of your strategies and milestones have shifted significantly—finance, as an example—therefore they no longer represent the optimal path forward for your community.

Without a clearly stated and widely understood organizational purpose, people would act in a way that they believe works best for the community. There are risks of inconsistency and incoordination. Here I list a few questions to help you and your organization stick to the core, the purpose of your organization, when you plan upcoming changes in 2021:

- What is the impact of the change to the community?
- How would we know if the work has made a difference or not? (What is the right set of metrics?)
- What is the connection to the organizational purpose?
- Who else needs to be part of the conversation?

2. It's All About the People

By people, I mean two different groups: the community and the staff. Let's focus on the first group for a moment. Public organizations are entrusted by the people we serve. In an earlier article,¹ I made a point that people's experience in our services differ, as all of us have unique situations and biological and socio-cultural differences. It is up to the organization to design delivery processes that address the diverse needs.

The pandemic has amplified the urgency to understand and meet those needs. From creating and enforcing new rules, transitioning in-person services to remote and online services, or adding new services, we had to find ways to listen to the community and lessen the impact of the pandemic. This is the second constant: understanding and meeting people's needs.

The same principle applies to the staff. People bring organizations to life. At the beginning of the pandemic, organizations had to respond right away. Many of the changes we have made would have been considered impossible in that time frame before. Our people made it happen. They run on adrenaline and are torn between work and personal life. This is not sustainable. We must support our staff by understanding and meeting their needs. Even before the pandemic, understanding and meeting employees' needs is key to employment engagement and building a productive workforce.

Has your organization invested in understanding and meeting people's needs both within and outside your organization? Here I list a few questions to help you and your organization take better care of your people when you plan upcoming changes in 2021:

- Of the work you do, what matters to your community and your staff?
- How do you know (what proof/data do you have to support it)?
- Who will likely have different needs?
- How can you address the diverse needs accordingly?





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3. You Need an Evidence-based Approach

Fighting the pandemic may be the project of the year, or the next few years; a piece of work that happens at a point in time. But change is constant and the need to address change is ongoing. That is why it is necessary to continue to adopt an evidence-based approach.

Take the pandemic as an example. It is important to adjust public health measures according to changing situations. The province of Ontario in Canada has adopted a series of indicators to monitor and assess local public health conditions. When results are improved or worsened, lesser or stronger measures will be triggered.

The defund movement is another example. To operationalize defunding, we have a series of questions to answer: How much police funding are we going to reallocate? To whom? What accountability measures will need to be in place to ensure the success? These are some of the important questions to make defunding work. But none will be possible if the evidence is not in place.

To manage upcoming changes more effectively, here are a few questions to help you and your organization better adopt an evidence-based approach:

- Of the issues you are tackling, what information do you have in place?
- Is the information timely and reliable?

- Does it reflect sound reasoning?
- Are the consequences of the solution clearly defined?

Conclusion

Our experience in 2020 has challenged many of our assumptions about how we work. As Carolyn Dewar, a McKinsey senior partner, said, “Maybe we can do things without all the preceding conversations we thought were necessary.... Maybe we can collaborate with others in dynamic ways to accelerate progress.” Maybe we don’t need that much office space. Maybe automating or digitalizing services is not as far off or as challenging as we thought.

We know change is constant and we, as public servants, are expected to be adaptive and agile. To manage changes more effectively, you need a strong foundation. I am sure there will be many changes upcoming in 2021. To plan a strong rebound ahead, maybe it is worth discussing and learning those pivot points as you turn. What’s your pivot point? **PM**

ENDNOTE

¹ “What We Can Learn from the Movement to Defund Police” Kel Wang, ICMA Blog, September 2020.

KEL WANG is corporate performance lead, city of Edmonton, Canada (kel.wang@edmonton.ca).



DON'T LET YOUR COMMUNITY BE THE NEXT CYBER ATTACK HEADLINE

Protect Your Organization and Residents by Joining the ICMA Cybersecurity Collaborative

With new cyber threats emerging every day, ICMA has partnered with the National Association of Counties (NACo) to strengthen local governments' cybersecurity efforts. The ICMA Cybersecurity Collaborative will provide access to top tier technology security professionals, information, intelligence, best practices, and other resources to help local government leaders prepare for, prevent, and mitigate cybersecurity threats.



Features and Benefits of the Collaborative

- Daily security news and security alert portal.
- Peer-to-peer exchange through community discussion.
- Online training, webinars, and live tech demos.
- Incident Response (IR) Team comprised of the membership pool to help identify, assess, and remediate an incident within 24 hours.
- Direct communication with industry leading chief information security officers (CISOs).
- Security research and report repository.

**Leverage industry leading expertise. Improve cybersecurity readiness.
Resource saving collaboration.**

Learn more at icma.org/cybersecurity-collaborative.

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Homeward Bound

BY CRAIG WEISS

Fort Lauderdale's **homeless intervention** administrator is living her dream

Angela Blaine knows what it's like to be homeless, and she has made it her mission to help others find their way out.

Originally from the United Kingdom, Blaine experienced homelessness about 20 years ago. She had been laid off from her job as customer service job representative and got evicted from her apartment as a result. Blaine ended up living in a temporary housing center. "It was a bit of a shock," Blaine said. "I told myself 'I am going to make the best of the situation.'"

After about five months, things began to turn around. Blaine took advantage of educational programs and ended up landing a job at the same agency that helped her get back on her feet. She got her own apartment, and realized her



Angela Blaine

true calling was to aid the homeless.

Blaine eventually made her way to Florida and started working as a clerk with the city of Fort Lauderdale. It was supposed to be a temporary position, but four years later, Blaine hasn't left the city—and now works as its homeless intervention administrator. "This was my dream," Blaine said. "To work with local governments and to work with the homeless. I am living my dream."

She works in partnership with the city's neighbor support manager, Hal Barnes, to help the city's homeless population. "He is very patient and very supportive of everyone on the neighbor support team," Blaine said.



Robert/stockadobe.com



CHRIS LAGERBLOOM is city manager of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.



motorion/stockadobe.com

Blaine had been in her current role for less than a year when the COVID-19 pandemic began. She and Barnes worked on the city's plan for the homeless. Through the temporary hotel voucher program, the city was able to house more than 100 homeless people in two area hotels during the lockdown period. Local businesses and private donors also stepped in to provide food and services. But the city's efforts didn't stop there. The city and a group of volunteers worked together to offer on-site case management services, legal aid, job training assistance, and other services to the homeless.

Scott Pring was nursing a foot injury and was in a wheelchair when Fort Lauderdale police brought him to one of the hotels participating in the housing program. About a week into his stay, the 53-year-old ended up in the hospital because of his foot. "[Angela Blaine] was very understanding of my situation and would say 'Don't worry about losing your room because you're injured,'" Pring said. "That felt very good. I give them five stars. They were all helpful."

The city later helped arrange for Pring to go back to his relatives in Nebraska by bus. But on the day he was supposed to make the trip, Blaine surprised him with an airplane ticket home. The ticket had been purchased by a local donor. "A few days later the cops gave me a ride to the airport, and after one little layover in Texas, I was home," Pring said. Pring is now living in Grand Island, Nebraska and keeps in touch with Blaine.

He also recently learned she had once been homeless herself. "It doesn't surprise me," he said. "She is patient and I'm always like, 'I don't know how you can be so patient with this nonsense.' I never saw her get upset with anybody. She seemed like she was always looking for ways she could help."

Blaine had been working with the city for about two years before administrators learned she had experienced homelessness herself. The revelation came during a meeting about resources when she shared with her colleagues about her past and the types of services that would've helped her.



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Blaine uses her past to create bonds with the hundreds of people the city provides assistance to each year. "I think it's important to mention it to people so they know I am not asking them to do anything I wouldn't do myself," Blaine said.

The city recently received a letter from a formerly homeless father thanking them for their assistance in helping his family get a fresh start. In his letter, the man wrote this about Blaine:

Angela Blaine has taken time from her weekend to come in and help me. She has called me many times to guide and assist me. She works so hard and goes above and beyond in what she can do. Her compassion and knowledge has helped me in more ways than I can tell you. We feel a special connection to her. She is a wonderful human being and a kind soul.

Blaine says she loves her job with the city, and cannot imagine working anywhere else. "I truly enjoy working for the city of Fort Lauderdale," she said. "The people I work with, it's like a family." Blaine says she wants to help the city continue and improve assistance programs for the homeless. "We care and we are passionate about it," she said. "We want to do what we can for our neighbors." **PM**

ICMA Student Chapters *Celebrate 10 Years*

BY ROB CARTY AND
REBECCA DESANTIS

120 chapters across the globe

It has been a decade, and we celebrate growing to 120 student chapters, including 20 international schools! As part of ICMA's Next Generation strategies, ICMA Student Chapters began in January 2010, as a pilot program to expand on ICMA's long-standing student membership. It all started with a check from ICMA member Sam Gaston registering our first chapter at the University of Alabama, Birmingham, with 19 graduate students. Within a year, we were up to 10 chapters, and as word spread, more schools signed on.

The first goal was to connect existing student members in MPA/MPP programs that may not know about their shared membership in ICMA and interests in local government management. Bringing students together could also expand interest and inform students who were unaware of the profession, and allow them to get a better sense of the opportunities the career offers.

Baked into the original design was also the idea to engage undergraduates in the chapters, helping inform early career aspirants that local government generally offered a wide variety of career options and room for growth. A new flat-rate membership model for chapters encouraged growth without increasing costs for students or schools. Thanks to a grant from ICMA-RC in 2016, we were able to remove the cost barrier for schools and help individual fundraising efforts benefit chapter programs directly.



ROB CARTY is the director of career and equity advancement, ICMA (rcarty@icma.org).



REBECCA DESANTIS is a program manager of career and equity advancement, ICMA (rdesantis@icma.org).



University of Southern California

We encourage you to engage with students. We were all students at one point and remember the mentors that helped us along the way.

Over the past few years, we have found new ways to help our student chapters connect with managers and deepen their connection with the profession. Monthly newsletters sent to all student chapter members help keep our students, faculty advisor, and mentors aware of all programming and student-specific content. This fall, after seeing the success of connecting with groups of chapters in the spring as a way to support students during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Student Leadership Network Series was born. This series is an opportunity for student leaders to come together quarterly

to discuss successes and challenges in leading a chapter, as well as important local government issues that students are interested in exploring. Hundreds of students attended the UNITE Conference in September 2020 and took part in every aspect of the event. We offered multiple sessions and roundtables that were created in conjunction with students and gave them the opportunity to present to their peers and members.

One of our favorite ways to engage with students is to celebrate their hard work and early dedication to the local government profession. In the spring semester, 38 students were awarded the Local Government Early Career Service Certificate, a program that started in 2019.



Arizona State University



Texas A&M University

This certificate recognizes graduating students in good academic standing who have completed a major service project for a local government organization. We also awarded four chapters this year's Best Chapter Event prize. The University of Delaware, Arizona State University, University of Southern California, and Texas A&M University all held exceptional events during the 2019–2020 school year and received \$1,000 to use for chapter programming and student professional development.

As we do every year, we collected annual reports from over 50 active chapters and published them on our website. This not only showcases the events and projects that our students planned in the past year, it also informs all ICMA members of the exciting work that the next generation of local government leaders are conducting.

We extend our thanks and gratitude to schools and chapter faculty advisors for their continued efforts to teach local government management, and the managers that mentor and advise chapters and students and engage them with the profession and local governments. One thing we know from these past years: student lives are changed when they hear from professionals. When we visit a

classroom and share our experiences, challenges, and joys of working in this profession, we inform them often of a brilliant career path they never considered

or didn't know about. A striking number of students we speak with say they learned about the profession, or were inspired to work in it, by meeting a manager, deputy, or other professional visiting their class.

We encourage you to engage with students when you have the chance: work with a chapter in your area, connect as an alumnus with your alma mater, or contact a school to help support or start a new chapter where you see an opportunity. You can find our roster of ICMA Student Chapters online at icma.org/student-chapters and also explore student profiles, chapter reports, or even sign up to mentor students directly with ICMA CoachConnect. We were all students at one point, and we all remember the mentors that helped us along the way. We serve our communities by being that mentor to others. Thank you for 10 great years, and we look forward to many more years of engaging with and supporting students! **RM**

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Wireless Lease Buyouts

A potential revenue solution after a difficult 2020

BY CRAIG WEISS

Short on funds for government services?

Many government entities have suffered low tax revenues in 2020 due to the unprecedented financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sales taxes typically amount to about one-fourth of annual state and local tax revenues. However, due to the pandemic, social distancing and business closures have resulted in declines in consumer spending at certain establishments, such as restaurants, hotels, and many others. These types of businesses are usually taxed more heavily, so state and local governments may be experiencing particularly steep declines in 2020 and beyond.

As a result of these significant tax revenue losses, government entities may find it more difficult to meet vital community needs, such as elementary, secondary, and higher education, law enforcement and corrections, and trash pickup. Since state and local governments generally strive to balance their annual operating budgets, they may find it difficult to borrow money to finance deficits, resulting in dire financial need this year and the future.

Government entities occasionally lease portions of their properties and assets to wireless and communications companies to make extra money for annual operating expenses. In exchange for an agreed-upon fee and time period, telecommunications providers and cell tower companies set up towers on government land or buildings to provide dependable wireless connectivity to commercial and residential customers in the surrounding areas.

One efficient way for cities, counties, and municipal corporations to start immediately funding essential community needs is by selling the cash streams from wireless leases they already have in place on governmental properties and structures, while still owning the sites the leases are on. Third parties may even offer and pay multiples of the lease revenues to provide the much-needed upfront cash, which is money that can immediately be put back into the community for services and assets such as health and hospitals, highways and roads, and public welfare.

In fact, city council members and commissioners can allocate the money however they see fit and are permitted. There are no rules and restrictions from the buyers on what government entities can do with



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revenue generated from wireless lease buyouts. In addition to, or in lieu of, funding essential community needs, the money made from selling the revenue streams from wireless leases can be put toward non-critical projects and endeavors. These may include things like the construction of a public auditorium, extending a central city bike path, or establishing a free virtual concert series.

Another major advantage of wireless lease revenue buyouts is that they can help government entities reduce their accounting for multiple streams of revenues, especially if the municipality has numerous wireless leases that are income producing. Additionally, the same third party businesses that buy the lease revenue may also offer lease management and marketing services. Should the governmental entity engage in such an arrangement it can release the municipality or other entity from the burden of managing leased towers and infrastructures or coordinating lease logistics with telecommunications companies and personnel. As well the management and/or marketing company may find other carriers as potential lessees thus generating even more revenue.

Keep in mind that third-party companies can buy lease revenue streams on any government property and municipally owned sites. These may include parks, annexed land, water towers, and tops of commercial buildings. Additionally, more than one lease may be sold at one time, which creates even bigger possibilities for generating revenue for both essential community needs and non-essential public projects. **PM**



CRAIG WEISS is

co-founder and partner at Tower Ventures. Tower Ventures (towerventures.com) has been in the wireless telecom infrastructure business for over 30 years and owns over 400 tower facilities across the United States. Tower Ventures also specializes in marketing and management of third-party facilities, buildings, and rooftops for private companies, as well as municipalities, and has over 40 current municipal landlords. (craig@towerventures.com)



PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

POWER THROUGH THE UNPRECEDENTED

**Local Government Leaders React
to the Challenges of 2020 and
Share Their Tips to Adapt in 2021**



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Renée N. Wilson, MPA, Grants and Governmental Affairs Manager, Miami Lakes, Florida

INTRODUCTION

Before 2020 began, we asked ourselves, “What will the year ahead look like?” Our predictions certainly didn’t match the outcomes. As Executive Director Marc Ott said in the 2020 ICMA Annual Report, “This year defies the boundaries of the traditional.” So how do we plan for the year ahead after a year like no other? We’ve asked seven local government experts for insight into the challenges of 2020, how best to adapt in 2021, and how to find opportunity among uncertainty.

Seemingly a central theme of this past year has been “leading through disruption.” Tanisha Briley remarks in her piece, “It has been exhausting to manage the manic cadence of decision-making with life and livelihood consequences for the communities we serve while balancing day-to-day operations, fiscal distress, issues of inequity, and planning for a post-pandemic future.”

Of utmost importance is the continuing need to address racial, structural, and systemic inequities—and the resulting civic unrest—in our communities. “The unrest of 2020 showed that even the most well-managed organizations don’t always get to set the agenda.” Kurt Wilson discusses this and more. Siri Russell contends that “local government has an opportunity to make promoting equity in our communities more than a moment. We can make it the new normal.”

Along those same lines, when it comes to local government management of threats and emergencies, Jay Gonzalez says, “We need to recognize that the most severely impacted residents are those from marginalized populations. We cannot just read and think about them. We must walk our talk.”

Given the concerns facing police governance and service delivery, Division Chief George A. Perez says that “these challenges are not insurmountable, but rather solid opportunities for current and future police and government leaders to embrace.”

And as these concerns have changed the way we do business—as an organization and as individuals—we’re exploring the future of work itself. While many have been working from home, “the pandemic has generated a reinvigorated sense of neighborhood and community,” says Paul Martin. “Local government must harness that passion for place, even as we revive our damaged economies.” Economic restoration is now top of mind as we begin to rebuild. Sheryl D. Bailey discusses “the pandemic’s significantly uneven impacts and the accelerated transformations in business operations and consumer behavior.”

While the challenges and uncertainties of 2020 still persist, we can go into 2021 resilient and strengthened by our resolve to lead our communities into a better tomorrow. We’re all in this together. Executive Director Marc Ott said it best in his opening remarks of ICMA’s UNITE digital event in September: “As with all of the challenges we face, we can accelerate progress by learning from each other.”

CIVIC UNREST

The Challenges of 2020

The unrest of 2020 showed that even the most well-managed organizations don't always get to set the agenda. Public management requires constant management of the tensions and opportunities in which one person or group might benefit more than another. Whether or not it's something they can control, cities and counties are the most accessible face of government and are held accountable for everything that affects their jurisdiction. Officials must do the right thing, but that's not enough. They must also hope other officials in other jurisdictions do the right thing or else everyone pays the price for mismanagement.

Adapting in 2021

Local government should start with true public engagement to understand the points of conflict, separating them into things within their control and things they can't control. Rather than fighting about things they can't control, they can accept that bearing the load for other people is the price of being the symbol of government. Avoiding the fight also avoids damaging

relationships and opportunities for progress. The extra energy can be used to focus on one of the aspects that are actually within the local government leader's control.

People will always want and deserve the fastest and most comprehensive set of improvements. If that's practical, it's the best option. If it's not realistic, though, I recommend making whatever level of progress that's possible for your community. Even slow, discrete changes bend the curve toward progress. The worst scenario would be to find yourself in exactly the same place in the future.

Opportunity

Government is supposed to be reliable, consistent, and accurate. The trade-off is that this makes government slow to change. This is frustrating to everyone outside of government who wants to quickly fix things and move on to the next issue. The events of 2020 weakened people's aversion to change. Longstanding issues that couldn't be implemented because of organizational inertia have their best chance in 2021. Labor groups and residents are looking for leadership and willing to compromise on traditions they thought they couldn't

live without. Instead of setting the goal of restoring things to 2019 standards, you have the opportunity to reimagine the organization and the entire service-delivery model. It's a once-in-a-generation opportunity that shouldn't be squandered. Our organizations can come out of this better than they came in.

Key Takeaway

Leadership matters. The people in our communities count on us to provide that leadership even when we lack formal authority. If you see a leadership void in your community, don't be afraid to fill it. Even if it's "not my responsibility," your residents will be well served knowing that you're willing to rise to the occasion in times of crisis.

"Longstanding issues that couldn't be implemented because of organizational inertia have their best chance in 2021."



DR. KURT WILSON, ICMA-CM, is a local government advocate, researcher, and educator whose career spans more than two decades, four cities, two state agencies, and two federal agencies. In addition to his city manager background, his local and statewide law enforcement roles have included front-line, oversight, regulatory, communications, recruitment, and training.



ADDRESSING RACIAL, STRUCTURAL, AND SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

The Challenges of 2020

Local government leaders and their communities have gotten a workout during 2020. For many, the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the continued confrontation with racial and social injustice, has forced them to engage in ways they never could have predicted.

Adapting in 2021

In 2021, we will all have to continue to do some internal diagnostics: Where do we continue to be pained? What have we tried that still isn't working? What relationships remain unformed? How are going to adapt our strategy to address these issues?

Opportunity

Local government has an opportunity to make promoting equity in our communities more than a moment. We can make it the new normal. To do that we will have to enter 2021 with an even stronger commitment to re-evaluating our systems, questioning our processes, and constantly assessing our progress in creating equitable outcomes.

Key Takeaway

Our enemy is fatigue. It is imperative that we deny ourselves the comfort of falling back to business as usual. We know that for many local governments "business as usual" upholds systems that maintain, and in many cases, perpetuate inequity in our communities. Looking ahead, we can't afford to be too tired to act on eliminating racism, poverty, sexism, homophobia, or any other barrier to equitable opportunity in our community.

"Our enemy is fatigue. It is imperative that we deny ourselves the comfort of falling back to business as usual."



SIRI RUSSELL is the director of equity and inclusion, Albemarle County, Virginia.



ECONOMIC RESTORATION

The Challenges of 2020

The 2020 pandemic brought rapid and extraordinary changes to businesses, employees, communities, and local governments, dramatically altering the landscape and outlook on all fronts. Many changes will be permanent with enduring impacts on businesses, workers, and communities. Resiliency and adaptation have been key to the initial response and will be key to evolving into the new reality spurred by the pandemic.

Adapting in 2021

Most importantly, look forward and not back in 2021. Given the pandemic's significantly uneven impacts and the accelerated transformations in business operations and consumer behavior, it

will be important for local government leaders and communities to embrace the transformations and new opportunities in order to evolve. With the economic structural changes, small business support programs, workforce training, and economic development will be critical for many communities.

Opportunity

In 2021, a major opportunity for the local government profession is to lead in bridging our social divides, which will enhance economic restoration and community well-being. Otherwise, we will be driving into economic and community recovery with our brakes on. For example, the National Main Street Center and Brookings identified bridging social divides as a key factor for the economic revival of rural main streets.

Key Takeaway

Change and uncertainty will continue to define 2021. Leading through uncertainty will be a critical skill. Adaptable decision-making, financial resiliency, long-term financial planning, robust scenario planning, and early warning systems will be vital tools to emerging into the new reality. And human capital is always our number-one resource.

“Human capital is always our number-one resource.”



SHERYL D. BAILEY, PhD, is visiting professor of practice in the School of Public and International Affairs at Virginia Tech. Bailey returned to academe after a career in public service, having served as a senior executive and financial director in state and local government and the private sector, including gubernatorial cabinet and state authority director positions in Virginia.

¹ Main Street America (2020, December 01). New Research from Brookings and the National Main Street Center on the Value of Main Street Organizations. Chicago, IL. <https://www.mainstreet.org/blogs/national-main-street-center/2020/12/01/new-research-from-brookings-and-the-national-main>



LEADING THROUGH DISRUPTION

The Challenges of 2020

The disruption experienced in 2020 has been relentless, compound, and far-reaching. It has been exhausting at times for local government leaders to manage the manic cadence of decision making with life and livelihood consequences for the communities we serve while balancing day-to-day operations, fiscal distress, issues of inequity along race and socioeconomic lines, and planning for a post-pandemic future.

Adapting in 2021

We spent the vast majority of 2020 responding to multiple crises for which we were not and could not have been prepared. We are heading into a new year with the benefit of retrospection and foresight to inform our efforts going forward. Even with an imminent COVID-19 vaccine, the three W's (wear a mask, watch your distance, and wash your hands frequently) will likely be with us through 2021 and we must prepare our organizations and communities for

this reality. We must also foster hope for the future, focus on and be responsive to the needs of the community, and look for leveraging opportunities so that we may emerge from all of this better prepared and more resilient.

Opportunity

With partisan extremism continuing at the state and federal levels of government, our communities are relying on local government to provide strong leadership on the critical issues that have been laid bare in 2020. This year required local government leaders to learn new skills and use existing skills in new ways. However, one of the most disruptive lessons of 2020 was a reckoning with the fact that we can't "skill build" or plan our way out of the crises our communities face. We have to commit ourselves to the work in novel ways and use our newly developed ability to better tolerate ambiguity to explore the root causes of the problems we face with the communities we serve to create collective solutions that will be more equitable and effective.

Key Takeaway

The disruption we faced in 2020 fostered extraordinary levels of ingenuity and innovation in our organizations and our communities that have positively transformed local government service delivery. In our eagerness to return to "normal" we should be careful not to dismiss real improvements as short-term responses and find ways to preserve and advance those new practices that have proven to be successful.

"It has been exhausting to manage the manic cadence of decision-making with life and livelihood consequences for the communities we serve while balancing day-to-day operations, fiscal distress, and issues of inequity."



TANISHA R. BRILEY is city manager of Gaithersburg, Maryland. Her career in the public sector spans nearly two decades, with 14 years in city management. She most recently served as city manager of Cleveland Heights, Ohio.



THE FUTURE OF WORK

The Challenges of 2020

In 2020, city managers and their staff have all been impacted by a massive challenge. Whether in London, Kentucky; London, Ohio; or London, England, city managers and their staff have all experienced similar struggles brought by COVID-19. This has generated a valuable sense of connectedness. It has also helped prepare local government leaders for the great challenge ahead of the climate emergency, which similarly is a global challenge that will be experienced locally.

Adapting in 2021

The pandemic has generated a reinvigorated sense of neighborhood and community. “There’s no place like home” has rarely been so true. Here in London, we have found that although the iconic West End has been hit

hard, our more suburban neighborhoods have survived and even thrived due to their community spirit and mutual support. Local government must harness that passion for place, even as we revive our damaged economies.

Opportunity

Twelve years after the Great Recession, we must build on all that we have learned about how to support local economies and communities through a period of massive challenge. We need to develop in our organizations the skills that are essential to be effective in this context—empathy, to understand the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic and economic stress; strategic vision, to envisage reimagined downtowns, restructured economies, and the green industrial revolution; and business management, to achieve the services that communities need at a price they can afford.

Key Takeaway

There has never been a time when folks need city hall as they do today. The stakes are high. Your job has never mattered more. Look after yourself and your team.

“The pandemic has generated a reinvigorated sense of neighborhood and community. Local government must harness that passion for place, even as we revive our damaged economies.”



PAUL MARTIN is city manager (chief executive) in the London Boroughs of Wandsworth & Richmond, serving a population of 550,000 people in south west London, England.

POLICE GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY

The Challenges of 2020

This year was expected to bring with it the continued challenges of community engagement, reducing gun violence, and embracing technologies to better support our personnel. However, 2020 brought the unfathomable challenges stemming from COVID-19. These challenges included enforcing COVID-19 restrictions, employee wellness, fiscal impacts, and community and commercial impacts, as well as overwhelming uncertainties due to the 2020 election cycle and the tragic death of George Floyd and its aftermath.

Adapting in 2021

Where there are challenges, there are opportunities. Though 2020 brought forth the aforementioned challenges, 2021 will provide local government and police leaders the opportunity to carry out effective and efficient responses to sustained challenges

such as COVID-19 contact tracing, personal and commercial social distancing and mask restrictions, property evictions, unemployment, and the never-relenting increase in mental health incidents.

Opportunity

The phrase, “Out with the old and in with the new,” is ripe with the promise of achieving a sustainable new normal in our communities—a normal that ushers in tantalizing opportunities to help us address our challenges as they relate to employee and community wellness programs, mental health, and community engagement opportunities to showcase businesses doing their part against the fight against COVID-19.

Key Takeaway

Other challenges facing professional policing in 2021 and beyond include employee recruitment and retainment, generational leadership management,

artificial intelligence and cloud-based data management, community apathy, and enhancing community private and public partnerships. Each of these challenges are not insurmountable, but rather solid opportunities for current and future police and government leaders to embrace, which invariably will result in a more efficient, sustainable, and effective organization.

“Each of these challenges are not insurmountable, but rather solid opportunities for current and future police and government leaders to embrace.”



DIVISION CHIEF GEORGE A. PEREZ is a law enforcement executive with the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD). He has served the citizens of Miami-Dade County for more than 20 years.



THREATS AND EMERGENCIES

The Challenges of 2020

Presidential messaging is very critical for effectively combatting public health pandemics all the way to our cities' neighborhoods. Conflicting public health messaging coming from the federal and local governments has lethal consequences. Countries in Africa and Asia that have less sophisticated healthcare systems than us, but where their chief executives and local leaders were on the same page with clear and firm messaging, collaborative action, and science-backed guidance, have had better success at mitigating COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.

Adapting in 2021

The most important next step to take in 2021 and beyond is educating our residents about sacrificing one's self for others. Among major U.S. cities, the city and county of San Francisco has been relatively more successful at mitigation because of

the self-sacrificing tone and theme of their initiatives. To encourage mask wearing, plastered all over the city and its webpages are multilingual signs that say: "I got you covered. I protect you. You protect me."

Opportunity

Vertically, opportunities to strengthen inter-governmental relations, communications, and actions have emerged. Horizontally, COVID-19 has exposed the regional interconnectedness of cities and counties that is especially apparent during threats and emergencies. Vulnerabilities are opportunities to better plan for the next ones.

Key Takeaway

Our profession is experiencing an unprecedented clamor for better and more sincere inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. Whether it's health pandemics or climate change-induced disasters and emergencies, we need to recognize

that the most severely impacted citizens are the low-income, the elderly, black and brown communities, those without health insurance, persons with disabilities, homeless veterans, and other marginalized populations. We cannot just read and think about them. We must walk our talk.

"We need to recognize that the most severely impacted residents are those from marginalized populations. We cannot just read and think about them. We must walk our talk."



JAY GONZALEZ, PhD, a long-time ICMA member, is Mayor George Christopher Professor of Public Administration at Golden Gate University. He served as San Francisco immigrant rights commissioner for close to a decade.

STRENGTH TO POWER THROUGH THE UNPRECEDENTED

A Poem in Tribute to 2020 and Beyond

Renée N. Wilson, MPA



RENÉE N. WILSON is the grants and governmental affairs manager for Miami Lakes, Florida.

Twenty-twenty has been one of those years,
We laughed, we mourned, and shed countless tears.
Our forests blazed, consumed with fires,
Homes destroyed with dreams and desires.
As we watched wooded lands burn into ash,
Kobe and Gianna were gone in a crash.
The horrors of this year were far from over,
A virus crept in, on the wings of a mighty wind,
From Wuhan to the world, our sorrows now begin.
We soon learned what afflicts one, afflicts all,
The economy once stood strong, began to fall.
Social distancing, masks, unemployment lines long,
Over 1.5 million human lives gone.
We thought a global pandemic would be our worst crest,
Until we shockingly witnessed a Black man's arrest.
George Floyd was added to the ancestors' tree,
On the day he was lynched by an officer's knee.
What about Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery?
The entire world responded with an outcry to police,
As we marched and moaned in our neighborhood streets.
It is time for CHANGE, we are tired of saying their names!
How long will we continue to hate the same?
If you chose silence, you are one to blame.
Lives viciously taken from the earth's vein.
The birth right to breathe is not a game.
Yet some think the oppressed are the insane?
Civic unrest, a nation in protest, this is not a test!
This is the reality of our history; one we must all detest.
Police violence and brutality against brown and black skin,
STOP! This is a sin!
If we cannot see each other as equals, how can we win?
ICMA declared we must now "UNITE,"
For racial justice and equality, we continue to fight!
There is no room for hate or racial supremacy.
We need more compassion, empathy, and mercy.
The people have spoken, their voices loud and clear,
You will not suppress our votes with your tactics of fear!
As a nation we bleed, we demand a new lead,
Though some refuse to concede, we will still succeed!
It is in our DNA to triumph and overcome,
Against all odds, we will not be undone!
For those we have lost, you are forever in our hearts.
Your memories will not fade, nor your courage depart.
We stand on your shoulders and the hope you represented.
You gave us the strength to power through the unprecedented.
We are one world, one humankind, so let us now come together
For 2021, my message is LOVE, harder and stronger than ever.



Roger L. Kemp MPA, MBA, PhD
Credentialed City Manager • Career Adjunct Professor
~ Police Services ~

Dr. Kemp provides national professional police consulting and speaking services on evolving police-community programs. Some of these topics include state-of-the-art practices in these dynamic and evolving fields:

- Citizen Advisory Police Commissions
- Citizen Police Commissions
- Citizen Police Academies
- Citizen Police Committees
- City Council Police Committees
- Coffee With A Cop Programs
- Neighborhood Police Offices
- Neighborhood Police Officers
- Pizza With the Police Programs
- Police Bicycle Patrols
- Police Community Forums
- Police Financial Controls
- Police Recruitment Practices
- Police Walking Patrols
- School Resource Offices
- Youth Police Services

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, on both coasts of the United States.

He has written and edited nearly 50 books on city subjects, and can speak and consult on them with knowledge of the national best practices in the police-community relations field. Call or e-mail Dr. Kemp for more information.

Dr. Roger L. Kemp
Kemp Consulting, LLC
Phone: (203) 686-0281 • Email: ROGERLKEMP46@GMAIL.COM
www.rogerkemp.org

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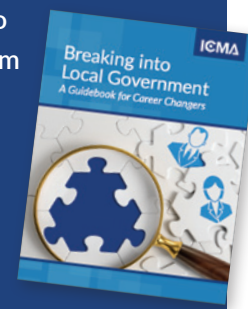
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