



PM

PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

THE ETHICS ISSUE



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Elevating Our Focus on Trust

This special **ethics** issue of PM | BY MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM

Trust is a precious asset. Any relationship that extends beyond the purely transactional relies on trust to be productive, mutually beneficial, and successful. In a democracy where the public entrust their very lives and well-being to elected and appointed officials, trust is oxygen. With it we thrive, without it we perish. Local government managers and their staff can influence the conduct of elected officials, but they certainly cannot control it. These professionals can take concrete steps though to protect the public's interests and to build trust with the public they serve, the staff they lead, and yes, the elected officials for whom they work.

Each March, we devote the contents of *PM* to ethics. We invite our members and experts in the field to share their perspectives, research, and techniques on building ethical competency at the personal and organizational level. This reflects ICMA's and the profession's commitment to the highest of ethical standards in public service. A common theme among our guest contributors in this edition is the critical need for conduct that builds, and in some cases restores, trust in government.

The indictment of three Cincinnati councilmembers in 2020 inspired our colleague, Jerry Newfarmer, to share his ideas on how managers can promote ethical behavior. Jerry's ideas are born of practical experience

having served as the city manager in Cincinnati, San Jose, and Fresno. In his article, he reflects as well on the value to good government of having a professional manager, who adheres to the ICMA Code of Ethics, serving in a council-manager structure. As Jerry observes, "The role requires managers to stand up without fear or favor to inappropriate political interference with good government practices, even when their jobs are on the line."

Dr. Michael Gillette, an ethicist and former elected official, shares a four-step process for analyzing your actions through an ethical lens. Dr. Gillette observes that critical thinking is especially needed in the public sector where the ramifications of missteps can be profound. In what is just a great quote, Dr. Gillette noted, "It will not do to rely on kindergarten-level ethics concepts when dealing with calculus-level ethics problems. But before we get to the 'how,' perhaps we should spend some time thinking about the 'why.'"

Rounding out the contributions for our experts, Dr. Patrick Malone reminds us that human beings are not angels by nature. Exploring principles that can help guide us all to make ethical decisions, Dr. Malone challenges us to "commit to a journey of ethical discernment in our thinking and behavior."

Our mission to promote ethical conduct is a global one. The final article on ethics highlights ICMA



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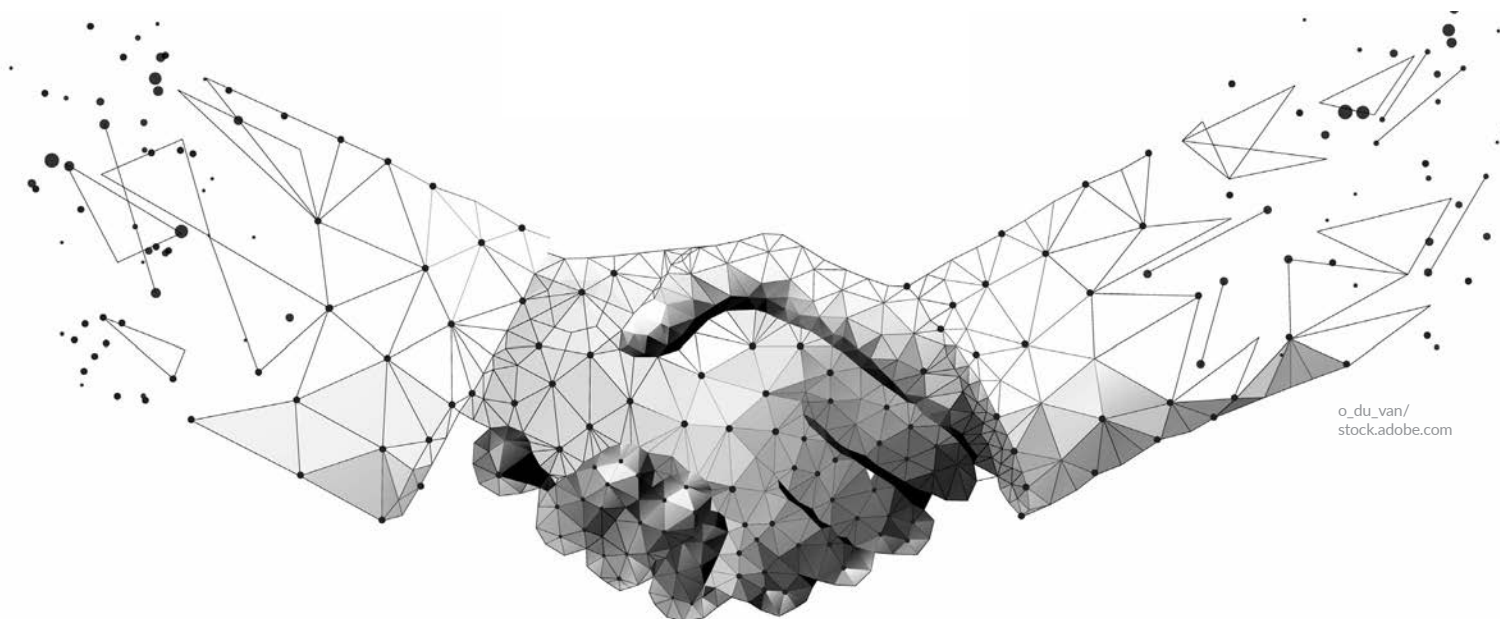
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Public Management (PM) aims to inspire innovation, inform decision making, connect leading-edge thinking to everyday challenges, and serve ICMA members and local governments in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world.



In a democracy where the public entrust their very lives and well-being to elected and appointed officials, trust is oxygen. With it we thrive, without it we perish.

Mexico's work to provide ethics training to elected and appointed officials.

We close out the edition with three important resources for our readers: the ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines, FAQs on ICMA's ethics enforcement process, and an up-to-date timeline on revisions made to the Code over its 97-year history.

In closing, I encourage you to do two things. First, please take a moment to renew your commitment to the profession's ethical standards by reading the ICMA Code of Ethics on page 30. And second, assist your staff and elected officials on their journey to making ethical decisions and building trust by sharing this content. **PM**

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The *ICMA Code of Ethics*

A continuous reflection of the **integrity** of our profession | BY MARC OTT

This month's PM magazine is our annual ethics issue. However, you can find Ethics Matters and other ethics content in every issue of the magazine and most issues of the ICMA newsletter. In fact our members tell us that ethics advice and support is the number-one benefit of belonging to ICMA and ethics is among the highest ranked topics of interest for members.

One of the things we most value when we get together as colleagues across jurisdictions is the ability to share a circumstance, decision, or outcome that posed a significant ethical challenge in the course of leading our cities and counties. I have benefitted from these discussions as a manager and especially in my role as ICMA Executive Director. I have listened to and shared my advice on the ethical challenges that others have faced.

**In making
courageous
decisions, the
Code of Ethics
remains our
most reliable
guidepost.**

The most difficult scenarios for the managers with whom I have spoken typically involve working through significant policy issues with their mayors and councils. Managers feel most comfortable working behind the scenes to provide the technical and professional advice needed by elected officials to discern among policy options. Because of our intimate knowledge of how our city or county operates, we bring a level of depth and insight to inform policy discussions that elected officials usually don't have. In many cases, our knowledge can help provide a clear-cut path to follow in drafting policy. But often there is not a clear path and there may be nuances of which only you and your staff are aware. While we may hesitate to engage, there are ways to appropriately offer perspective based on data and other insights that serve to enhance and refine policy development. We can effectively add to the policy discussion by applying our skills to facilitate the discussions and build consensus. Although ultimately, it remains the elected body's responsibility to make the policy decisions and our job to implement them to the best of our ability.

I have seen some managers hold up the Code of Ethics as a shield to avoid controversy.

During my time as city manager of Austin, there were instances where conflicting policies and the inability to come to a decision put the city's assets and even its residents at risk. I often talk about courageous leadership—times when managers may need to step into a leadership void, facilitate the difficult conversations, and take action to resolve conflicts. These actions occasionally put us at odds with elected officials. In making courageous decisions, the Code remains our most reliable guidepost.

It has often struck me that the ICMA Code of Ethics is like the U.S. Constitution. It is a foundational document that is solid at its core. However, its application must reflect the times in which we live. Our Code of Ethics is approaching its 100th anniversary and like the U.S. Constitution, there is simply no way our predecessors could have envisioned today's world. Take technology for example. The pace of change and the volume of data, information, and social media that local governments must deal with is mind boggling and poses all sorts of ethical challenges.

When you review the Code of Ethics Timeline on page 30, you'll see how the Code continues to evolve. It is not merely a set of rules, but a reflection of the integrity of the men and women who comprise our great profession, as well as those who volunteer their time to sit on our Committee on Professional Conduct and the ICMA Executive Board. We owe them our gratitude for keeping the Code of Ethics relevant in a rapidly changing world. **PM**



MARC OTT is executive director of ICMA, Washington, D.C.



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Designing for Accessibility Makes You a Better Human

Seeking out people with different experiences and abilities can greatly
improve our service to our community | **BY JACOB ANDERSON**

Speak up, ICMA!

Email us your thoughts on the issues of equity, inclusion, race, and social justice to speakup@icma.org.



JAY ANDERSON is responsible for digital engagement and public processes at the city of Colorado Springs. He holds an MPA from the School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado—Colorado Springs, where he serves as chair of the Dean's Community Advisory Board.

I've been working in community engagement for nearly a decade. Launching our city's service request app would expose an area of my career (and my life) that showed me how much more I had to learn. I thought implementing an app was about *technology*—I never thought I'd be learning about accessibility, inclusiveness, and my own biases.

I was responsible for launching a new service request tool (website/mobile app) for our community. The city's old app was about 10 years old, and we were starting over from scratch with a new vendor. I'd been working with city departments to make sure that their business needs would be met, but I had a feeling that we needed to engage the community to see how these services would work for them. I contacted a local organization that advocates for people with disabilities, and explained that I worked for the city and would like to talk to any community members who could help me test how the new app would serve them.

Why Users with Disabilities?

I decided to reach out to this organization for a few reasons. A previous supervisor of mine had arranged training in disabilities awareness with this organization, and it had been impactful. At one point, the trainer mentioned a long list of potential disabilities, and I had been surprised to see myself in a few of the categories. I had never thought of myself in this way, and something in me opened up and allowed more empathy for others. I'm a bit ashamed that I had to recognize myself in these categories to start thinking about accessibility and inclusion, but that's where my growth started.

Additionally, I was inspired to seek input from this community as a result of following the work of the Chicago's Civic User Testing Group. For years, I'd watched the work of this group, valuing the input of community users and actually paying them for their input on the design of city services. I admired this group and committed that when I had the opportunity to stand up services for our community, I would follow their lead.

Finally, I cemented my decision to reach out after hearing a podcast from 99 Percent Invisible

about "the curb cut effect." If you're not familiar with this concept, it's the idea that designing to serve people with special needs ends up benefiting everyone, often in unexpected ways.

Bringing Users Together to Represent Their Needs

Entering the building of the advocacy agency for the first user testing session, I became aware of some of the accommodations that I didn't always notice in my life. From the "fragrance free" sign on the door to the accommodations for service animals, to the surfaces used on the floors to allow wheels to travel more easily, everything was designed to make it easier for all visitors to feel like this was a place for them. Some of these accommodations were not familiar to me, so I learned a lot just from physically being in a place designed to be more welcoming to everyone.

When we had the meeting, the user group included people with a variety of visual disabilities, from total blindness to more mild challenges. I was anxious that I would do or say something wrong, but the group was friendly and helpful. We laughed, we shared concerns, and I learned a lot about how our local government was serving (and sometimes failing) them. I developed more empathy for this subsection of my community.

On the way back to my office, I remember noticing several aspects of the community that I hadn't paid attention to before. I noticed the timing of the pedestrian crossing lights, the overgrown tree branches that would impede someone on the sidewalk, the poor access to certain buildings. I had names and faces of people who would be inconvenienced by these obstructions.

Growing Empathy

It's easy to lead a project from your own experience, thinking that the rest of the world is roughly similar to you. It's natural—we often fall into the bias of our own lived experiences. But when the success of your project depends on people using it, your best move is to make sure that your whole community can use the service that you're building.

Considerations for Engaging Your Community

While I'm certainly no expert in accessibility, I did learn



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lessons from this experience that are helping me be more inclusive in designing services going forward:

Do research. Are there historical issues facing your community that might get in the way of your feedback event? Call them out early, own your part (or your organization's part), and make it clear that you're part of the solution. You won't get anywhere ignoring the elephant in the room, so if there's a big lawsuit or recent failure, it's best to call it out and position yourself as an ally trying to get to a better future.

Take time. Even if your feedback session takes longer than it should take, you are saving time in the long run because you will learn things the easy way that you would otherwise have to learn from confrontation, embarrassment, and distrust. I wanted to start our session talking about the navigation structure of the app, but we talked about specialized transit for 45 minutes first, because that was prominent on the minds of the

Designing to serve people with special needs ends up benefiting everyone, often in unexpected ways.

participants. I took their feedback, read it back to them (to show that I heard them), and promised to take it back to the transit division. Only then could we move on to talking about the app.

Speak inclusively. Presenting intentionally for people with disabilities reminds you that we are all varied and face our own challenges. Learn to speak in a way that embraces varied abilities. Explain what's on your presentation slide—don't expect your visuals to do the talking for you. Think about what you put on slides: will it be easy to translate into other languages? Is it all necessary?

Bring snacks. Even if someone is upset with your organization, they'll be more likely to welcome you if you bring treats. Just make sure you have options for people with dietary restrictions.

I've still got a long way to go in my effort to include everyone. As a representative of city government, it's a big part of my job to make sure that our services work for all members of our community. And looking back at this experience I know that I learned, I grew, and I became a better person. I was uncomfortable and sometimes incorrect, but I look back on this experience with pride, knowing that our service to our community, and my personal journey, are improved by seeking out people who have different experiences and abilities. **PM**

*This article was originally posted on GovLoop:
<https://www.govloop.com/community/blog/designing-for-accessibility-makes-you-a-better-human/>*

PROMOTING AN **ETHICAL** LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Ethical behavior, checks and balances, and sensitivity to areas prone to corruption help to ensure good government.

BY JERRY
NEWFARMER





Three Cincinnati city councilmembers were indicted on charges of corruption in the past year. This comes as a shock to Cincinnatians, who have long taken pride in good government. As someone who works across the United States with local governments, long the most trusted level of government in America, and as a former Cincinnati city manager, I find it especially disappointing.

Nearly 100 years ago, Cincinnati rebelled at the outright political corruption of the Boss Cox machine and adopted the council-manager form of government in a new city charter to reform the way the government worked. In recent years, the charter was amended to strengthen the role of the mayor in relation to councilmembers, resulting in increased politicization of decision-making. The hands-on involvement of elected leaders in development deals opened the doors to potential corruption.

The professional city manager, steeped in and committed to the ICMA Code of Ethics, is the foundation of good government. Indeed, there is evidence to support the assertion that the council-manager form of government promotes ethical behavior, which was a goal of Richard Childs when he originated the idea of the council-manager plan in the Progressive Era more than a century ago. Two scholars from the School of Government at the University of North Carolina, Kimberly L. Nelson and Whitney S. Alfonso, published a study in 2019 that found that corruption was 57 percent less likely in the council-manager form of government than in the mayor-council form, where decision-making is driven by political considerations.¹

So how do managers promote ethical behavior, both from the people who report to them and the ones who don't? I don't have all the answers, but I do have some ideas.

The
professional
city manager,
steeped
in and
committed
to the ICMA
Code of
Ethics, is the
foundation
of good
government.

The professional manager commits to leadership based on good management principles and ethical behavior.

That commitment includes making appointments to municipal leadership positions based on professional qualifications and making policy recommendations to the governing body in a transparent way based on best practices. The role requires managers to stand up without fear or favor to inappropriate political interference with good government practices, even when their jobs are on the line.

Ethical behavior starts with an emphasis on ethics in discussions with candidates for elective office and with new employees. Setting the tone from the outset is essential. It helps for new employees to receive guidelines and expectations about how they are to manage the demands of the public and elected officials without compromising themselves, and all employees should receive regular updates and reminders about possible conflicts of interest. The election season is a great time to remind employees not to campaign for anyone or display candidates' yard signs or bumper stickers.

The engagement of the full governing body in strategic planning can set the framework for governing through adoption of transparent policies. This

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Ellen Habel

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engagement serves to educate members about norms, ethics, and other expectations. Many newly elected officials have little or no experience in politics; some are accustomed to operating as advocates, and they don't always appreciate the influence that goes with their new position. Encouraging a retreat or collaborative effort with the governing body when new councilmembers are seated is an excellent time to help new members learn about their role and responsibilities, and the law (and remind those returning as well). It is an ideal time to discuss ethical dilemmas and potential conflicts of interest so all councilmembers are better prepared for issues that may arise.

The professional manager is particularly sensitive to areas where the potential for corruption exists.

It did not surprise me that the arrests of Cincinnati councilmembers were connected to proposed development projects. When elected officials take part in negotiating development deals, it creates a situation that is ripe for corruption: developers and their lobbyists are seeking city approval to build their projects and succeed financially, often with millions of dollars at stake, while politicians are looking to the next election and the campaign financing needed to win it.

The good government alternative is for the city or county administration, led by the professional manager (including planners, engineers, and attorneys), to do the job of implementing adopted development policies. (Every municipality has them!) When a development is proposed, elected officials should be hands off. Staff should apply adopted policies without fear or favor. Staff professionals have nothing to gain, financially or otherwise, in the approval or denial of an application. They can evaluate the proposal, then put their recommendations in writing for anyone to review in a transparent and public way. Beware the project that is rushed to the council, with elected officials being told they have to approve it right away or else!

Of course, the municipality's money is a prime area of temptation. The professional manager knows about the importance of internal financial controls and, in detail, what they are and how they actually operate. The local exchequer can be ripped off when checks and balances are not built into the system.

The well-trained professional manager for a city or county should similarly be knowledgeable about how each area of public service *should* operate, what the best practices are, and what inferior performance looks like. That's a tall order. Cities and counties are mini conglomerates, operating many different lines of business. Police service is qualitatively different from library service; maintaining public works infrastructure is markedly different work from planning and managing development on private property. It's true that corruption is a greater risk in some areas than in others, but poor performance because of corrupt or inept leadership can disserve the public just as badly, especially over time.

A 2019 University of North Carolina study found that corruption was 57% less likely in the council-manager form of government than in the mayor-council form.

Good government is based on every leader's commitment to the good of the community and controlled with checks and balances to ensure good behavior.

In recent years there have been initiatives in many cities to dilute the role of the elected councilmember or professional manager and to strengthen the role of the mayor. But all have an important role to play; elected council or commission members who represent the people in making policy, the mayor or commission president with a unique political leadership role, and the professional manager, charged with operating the government. Together, they ensure a system that is balanced; and by coupling that balanced system with the shared commitment of all to transparency and openness, good government is the result.

Proponents of placing more power in the hands of a mayor argue that elected officials are accountable to voters. But the professional city or county manager, serving at will, is readily accountable week in and week out, without having to wait until the next election, usually years away. At the same time, the professional manager is committed to operate the government, free from corrupting political "messaging around," serving as a buffer between the competitive world of electoral politics and the steady professionalism of staff, with the aim of accommodating both within an ethical framework. Sustaining clean, open government is best assured with a professional manager bound by the ICMA Code of Ethics.

It can be a difficult point to understand, both for elected officials and the public. I am encouraged that in cities such as Sacramento, where voters have recently had two opportunities to increase the power of the mayor, voters chose to preserve the balanced structure with a professional manager. It's incumbent upon those of us in the profession to articulate this argument whenever the opportunity arises: the council-manager form of government reduces instances of corruption. **RM**

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES

¹ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/puar.13050>

JERRY NEWFARMER, president and CEO of Management Partners, served as Cincinnati's city manager after serving as city manager in San Jose and Fresno, California.



PUBLIC SECTOR ETHICS: What, Why, and How

A four-step
process for
analyzing your
actions through
an ethical lens

BY MICHAEL A. GILLETTE, PhD

The What

Despite what you might have heard, you did not learn everything that you need to know before you reached grade school, there is no universal morality “sniff test,” and common sense is insufficient when dealing with uncommon problems. Complex ethical conundrums require complex analysis and solving real-world ethical issues requires a careful approach that must be learned, practiced, and developed so that it can be applied consistently and rationally across cases.

While the need for critical thinking is necessary in any situation involving the intricate interplay of people and/or organizational structures, it is of particular importance in the public sector, where the structure of decision making is shared, the range of stakeholders is diverse, justified expectations for transparency are intense, and the ramifications of missteps can be profound. It will not do to rely on kindergarten-level ethics concepts when dealing with calculus-level ethics problems. But before we get to the “how,” perhaps we should spend some time thinking about the “why.”



The Why

As public sector professionals it is undoubtedly clear that you have made a commitment to advance the public interest. The role that you play is defined by a duty to the citizenry that you serve and by the reasonable expectations that members of society have for you. In any circumstance in which a decision that one person makes creates the basis upon which other individuals will order their lives, an ethical duty emerges to satisfy the reasonable expectations that one person creates for another. If I make a promise, for example, and you comport your life around the reasonable expectation that I will keep my word, then I have generated a responsibility to follow through on my pledge. If I do not, to your detriment, then you will have every right to ask, “why did you do that to me?”

Surely there are times when a change in course is necessary and previous promises cannot be kept. Nevertheless, the person whose expectations were frustrated will deserve an explanation. That explanation must be rational, fair, and understandable. In other words, it must be based on clear reasoning, applied to all similar cases similarly so as to avoid arbitrariness, and it must be explicable. This will be true for every choice that a leader in the public sector makes, and it will certainly be difficult to satisfy these requirements when dealing with a variety of opinions from a vast array of constituents. The manager's role is even more complex, however, because in addition to serving the interests of the residents of a locality generally, the ethical duties of professionals in local government are also defined by a relationship with an elected governing body specifically.



Just as a duty exists to serve the populace based on a defined role and relationship, the role of a city or county manager is shaped by a relationship with local elected officials. The division of labor between the professional administrative staff and the elected officials must be made clear so that all parties know which decisions and actions belong to which actors. Since the elected official's duty is to focus on strategic thinking and policy decisions, he or she also has a responsibility to avoid micromanagement of tactical choices. The duty of the manager is to respect the will of the people as expressed through the electoral process, support the governing body in its work by providing options and analysis to the governing body, execute the will of the council or board, and avoid any reality or appearance of using the manager's position to undercut the authority of the elected body or to threaten the respect of elected office. During my 12 years serving as an elected official, I can say that I frequently witnessed other elected officials forgetting this division of labor, and that the most challenging ethical flashpoints emerged for the city manager when he felt a conflict between (a) serving the citizens, (b) supporting his staff, and (c) remaining respectful of elected officials who could at times make factually inaccurate and incendiary comments. Maintaining this balance is not easy, and doing it ethically is especially challenging. Fortunately, a process does exist for making consistent and defensible moral judgments; the types of judgments with which all parties might not agree, but all should respect.

The How

Although volumes could be written about the intricacies of sound moral reasoning, it should suffice for present purposes to outline a four-step process that, once mastered, will provide a solid structure for effective and efficient ethical analysis. That process can be summarized as (1) identify the default assumption, (2) assign the burden of proof, (3) engage casuistic exploration, and (4) apply conclusions to the current case.

STEP 1: Identify the Default Assumption

In our pluralistic democratic culture, we often behave as if all ideas are equally valid and that all options to solve a problem deserve equal

consideration and respect. This is definitely not true. Since we are engaged in the project of applied ethics—making real-world decisions in real time and in a real context—it is invariably the case that issues will arise with a history attached. Problems do not just appear out of nowhere, *sui generis* and detached from the environment from which they develop. Ethical conflicts or confusions present in a context that contains a number of default assumptions. Routinely, in the real world, we will be able to recognize a *ceteris paribus*, an “all other things being equal,” a guiding policy or procedure, a “way that we have always done things.” I would never suggest that we should always do things the way that we have historically done them simply because that is how we have always done them. We do need to develop and evolve in our thinking, and it is entirely possible that our standard mode of behavior has been wrong and must ethically be adjusted. However, the fact that we face ethical questions with a sense of history does make an argumentative difference.

The first thing to figure out when making a sound ethical argument is what we would do “all other things being equal.” If there were no special story, if there were no new information, what would we normally do? By asking that question, we are able to establish the default assumption, and the default assumption has power not simply because it identifies our customary response to the issue at hand, but because our customary response feels reasonable. It is customary precisely because it seems to make sense. We could be wrong in our initial feeling, and a good ethical analysis will reveal when the default assumption should be abandoned, but there can be no doubt that at the beginning of any argument, one side will have a decided advantage. The person maintaining the default assumption is not going to have to work very hard to prove his or her point. The person who wishes to dislodge us from the default will. And that brings us to step two.

STEP 2: Assign the Burden of Proof

Once we have determined the default assumption, the second step of assigning the burden of proof becomes almost automatic. In any argument, ethical or otherwise, it is imperative to determine if A needs to prove something to B, or if B needs to prove something to A. Who needs to do the work to win the argument? Do I have to prove that I am right, or do you have to prove that I am wrong? Understanding this dynamic is key to making critical ethical judgments. Perhaps an analogous example will help.

In a U.S. court of law, a criminal defendant is granted “the presumption of innocence.” The structure of a criminal trial does not begin with recognition that there are two equally valid and practically influential ideas at play. It begins with an assumption that the individual charged is innocent. That presumption of innocence is the default assumption. Once we identify the default assumption, we can easily assign a burden of proof. The defendant does not have to prove that he or she is innocent to win in a criminal trial; the prosecution is obliged to prove that he or she is guilty. There is a clear advantage in the discussion for the defendant, and the magnitude of this advantage should not be underestimated. Notice that after the prosecution rests, we need to do more than just think that the defendant is guilty. We

The Structure of Ethical Argument

The Process of Moral Reasoning

Identify the Default Assumption

Assign the Burden of Proof

Engage Casuistic Exploration

Apply Conclusions to the Current Case



The need for critical thinking is of particular importance in the public sector, where the structure of decision making is shared, the range of stakeholders is diverse, justified expectations for transparency are intense, and the ramifications of missteps can be profound.

need to do more than even weakly believe it. No matter how close the prosecution comes to proving the case, if it cannot be done decisively—in a way that satisfies the burden of proof—then the default condition prevails, and the defendant is found “not guilty.” It is essential to recognize that the defendant is not found “innocent,” because that would imply that innocence was established.

The defendant does not have to demonstrate innocence. All that is necessary for the defendant to walk free is for the prosecution to fail to prove guilt. Under that condition, by failing to meet the burden of proof, the default assumption remains intact. That is the power of steps one and two in a good ethical argument.

STEP 3: Engage Casuistic Reasoning

There is insufficient space in this article to explain in full the mechanism of casuistic reasoning, but in short, it involves arguing by analogy from known easy cases to unknown difficult cases. When faced with a difficult ethical decision—which could be defined as a situation in which reasonable, intelligent, and well-meaning people disagree, or a situation in which reasonable, intelligent, and well-meaning people are confused about how to proceed—we begin by finding analogies to the current case that do not generate disagreement or confusion. If it is not clear whether an administrator should confront a local elected official during a public meeting in order to protect staff from what appears to be an unfair characterization, for example, then we must first find a paradigm example of when it would be ethically correct to do such a thing, and that example should be so clear and easy that all would agree that it is appropriate to do so. We must then find a paradigm example of a case when, even though there is great frustration, it would not be ethically appropriate to confront the official publicly. Again, the second case should be clear enough that everyone agrees that the manager would act rightly by avoiding confrontation. Assuming that we have selected our paradigm cases well, and that they are similar enough to the current case to be informative but dissimilar enough to avoid generating the very type of disagreement or confusion that we are attempting to solve, then we would have all that we need to make a good ethical judgment about the current difficult case. By describing the differences between the two known easy analogues, it will be possible to identify the factors that justified action in one case but were missing in the other case. That information will be invaluable in determining a proper course of action in the current case. If the current case is more like the first example, confront! If it is more like the second case, back down.

In step one of the argument, we determined what the default assumption should be; most likely “all other things being equal, do not confront elected officials in public.” That immediately allows us to recognize that the burden of proof would be on the administrator who wants to confront an elected official publicly.

The elected official should not have to prove why he or she should not be confronted, the manager would have to justify such an action. Could there ever be justification for such behavior? Certainly yes, although potentially rare. By using casuistry, we can search for a good paradigm example to justify the extreme behavior and we will then know the conditions under which the burden of proof can be met, and atypical behavior would be ethically permitted or even obligatory. All that is left then is to move on to step four.

STEP 4: Apply Conclusions to the Current Case

Now that we know that all other things being equal public confrontation is not justified, but that it can be justified in the certain circumstances, and we know what those circumstances look like based on identification of a relevant analogue, all that is necessary is to ask whether the conditions identified by casuistic reasoning apply to the current situation. If they do, then the burden of proof has been met and it is ethical to depart from the default assumption. If they do not, no matter how close we might feel we are to justifying our behavior, the burden of proof cannot be satisfied, the default assumption remains operative, and we know what we must ethically do.

Conclusion

I have heard it said, even by people whom I greatly respect, that as a leader in the public sector, it is possible to make important decisions without setting a precedent. I believe that this view is incorrect. Not all cases are the same, and it would be improper to think that just because a manager makes one decision in one case that he or she has an ethical responsibility to make the same decision in all other cases. Giving a pay raise to one does not mean that there is an obligation to give a pay raise to all. However, managers do have an ethical responsibility to treat all similar cases similarly. If a pay raise is granted to a particular employee because that person’s salary is 20 percent or more below the market average, then an ethical obligation does exist to work toward raising the salaries of all employees who are receiving pay at 20 percent or more below the market average, unless there is some other compelling logical difference among them. A failure to do so begs the question, why one employee and not the other? And if the manager cannot describe the difference between the two cases in a rational, fair, and understandable way, then the victim of the manager’s arbitrariness has every right to ask, “why did you do that to me?” By applying the steps that I have outlined in this article, it should be possible to answer that question cogently, recognize that a change of course is needed, or avoid the situation that instigated the question. **PM**

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Renewing Our Focus on **ETHICAL DECISION MAKING**

Committing to a journey
of ethical discernment
in our thinking and
behavior

BY PATRICK S. MALONE, PhD



How do you view ethics? Be honest. Some may roll their eyes when it comes time for the annual ethics training as we anticipate a six-hour session full of tricky legal terminology and unrealistic scenarios. Always included is the proverbial list of dos

and don'ts to remind us of what we can and cannot do in the daily practice of public management. In the worst case, we may even nod off during lengthy philosophical discussions of the foundations of ethical thought in human history. Socrates, Cicero, and Plato were brilliant to be sure, but an entire day of hearing their metaphysical views might be a bit exhausting and difficult to apply.

Still, ethics, or shall we say, the lack thereof, makes itself known daily in the public service environment. Within the last several months, there has been a flurry of activity in cities and counties across the United States—all with an eye toward ethical reform. Ethics commissions at all levels continue to examine potential corruption among public employees, contractors, lobbyists, and political candidates. Professional conduct remains a focus in our attempts to foster workplaces of safety, civility, and inclusion. Conflicts of interest and the appropriate use of scarce public funds by elected officials is always on the radar. And finally, the COVID-19 outbreak has launched a new series of ethical queries around testing, masks, and access to vaccines.

At issue here is the very trust our citizens have in their government. Populations expect their public servants to make sound ethical decisions in the public interest. But the simple fact is that not many of our residents trust government to begin with. Oh, they like government well enough. They'll tolerate it. Most approve of the way government handles specific community needs. Public safety, healthcare, the environment, and roads all get passing marks. But trust is a different story altogether.

Only 20 percent of Americans trust the government to do the right thing just about always or most of the time. But that would be the government in Washington. At the local level the picture is a little brighter. A 2020 Gallup survey shows trust levels in local government to be 69 percent for Republicans, 67 percent for independents, and 79 percent for Democrats—numbers that have held remarkably consistent for almost 50 years. Compared to an average trust level of 33 percent for Congress and 43 percent for the executive branch, this isn't too bad, though work remains to be done.

Trust matters, which is why it's imperative for public servants to keep ethical considerations in the forefront. One of the most common benefits of a trusting public is their willingness to conform with local mandates. Compliance

with laws and regulations is especially critical for the safety of our neighborhoods. And with community reactions to COVID-19, trust can become a life-or-death matter.

Where We Stand

Many of us consider ourselves to be principled managers and leaders. It's a normal human perspective. We want to see the best in ourselves and others so we're more likely to assess ourselves as ethical, and in some cases more ethical than average. But upon closer examination, ethics isn't quite so easy. Take the well-known Trolley Problem, introduced by English philosopher Philippa Foot. In modern language, the dilemma presents itself as follows:

You're standing in the subway and you see that an approaching train is out of control and is positioned to kill five people. Standing next to you, in between the oncoming train and the five people, is a man wearing a large backpack. You realize that the only way to spare the lives of the five people is to push the man onto the tracks below, allowing his body and the large backpack to stop the train from reaching the others. What would you do?

Troubling, isn't it? Do you push the backpack guy in the way of the train and save the five people? Do you allow the five others to die knowing you could have saved them? Do you try to grab the backpack, put it on, and jump in the path of the oncoming train yourself? Such are the ethical dilemmas that philosophers like to ponder.



The good news is that the ethical challenges we confront as public managers are far less dramatic than this one. Only in the rarest of cases are we ever going to be faced with a decision that would result in something as tragic as a loss of life. However, there's bad news—the moral quandaries we encounter are far more common. In fact, they occur almost daily. Consider the following:

- We tell someone we are sorry we missed their call or email, when in fact we simply ignored it because we didn't want to deal with it.
- We show ourselves in the most positive light, taking more credit than we deserve and shifting blame elsewhere.
- We never follow through, and we never really intend to. We just

say we're going to because it will get us out of an uncomfortable situation.

- We look the other way when we witness unkind or unjust acts.
- We give a performance evaluation that isn't honest and forthright by telling someone, "you're doing just fine!" when in reality they aren't.

These are the real-life struggles that we all face as we manage our public organizations and we're not alone. The 2020 Global Business Ethics survey revealed that one out of every five employees feel they are being asked to lower their ethical standards. And it's worse for top managers. They are twice as likely to feel pressured for ethical compromise. In our hypercompetitive environment, these managers may be under pressure to meet strategic goals for agency performance, cut costs, or reduce services. Other organizational forces may be at play as well. Managers may feel it's unsafe to speak up and challenge practices they see as inappropriate if they wish to stay in the good graces of top leadership. The organizational culture may be one of "stay in your lane" where open discourse is not accepted. Finally, senior leadership may set a negative tone through their behaviors.

What We Can Do

It's not that we're bad people. We aren't. When you consider the pressures faced in the decision-making process, it's no wonder that we fall short on occasion. So many variables go into making sound decisions—identifying problems, seeking alternatives, finding resources, assessing performance, determining long-term viability and short-term effectiveness, evaluating—it's no wonder ethical considerations get lost on occasion. The problem is that it's those very principles that are the most important in the decisions we make. Strategic plans and budgets come and go. Decision-making models come and go. But the impact our decisions have on others is lasting, and the effects of unethical practices on public organizations and the communities they serve are enduring.

Placing an ethical frame around the choices we make is much easier than it sounds. Sometimes it can be as simple as a checklist that we refer to when faced with a difficult decision. In Donald Zauderer's groundbreaking 1993 article, "Winning with Integrity," he outlines several principles that can help guide us through the maze of decision-making.

Evaluate moral considerations. This begins with encouraging the input of others, carefully and honestly opening yourself to their opinions. Listen intently. Take the time to assess various interests and values. Do your homework. And don't forget a good dose of self-assessment so that you clearly identify your personal motives.

Safeguard the public trust. A must for the public servant. In fact, it is the very reason the public service exists. Loyalty to the public and the law must supersede allegiance to elected officials and private interests. Any sense of the appearance of impropriety must be dealt with immediately.

Take risks. By allowing unjust behavior to go unaddressed, we are committing one of the most egregious ethical transgressions. When doing so, we become compliant with, and party to, unacceptable activities. Managers must refuse to accept actions that

are ethically wrong and support others who have the courage to call attention to wrongdoing.

Exhibit humility. Clearly one of the most difficult acts in a “me-first” era, humility allows for a bond with others that facilitates open discourse and honest feedback. The mutual trust and respect that follows in organizations where this occurs will ensure long-term mission accomplishment.

Communicate truthfully. Providing the accepted spin on a message is never acceptable if we wish to keep others informed. Senior officials deserve to hear the real story. Those we lead require that we share all relevant information with them in order to facilitate their work. Failure to communicate truthfully in either direction sows the seed of distrust throughout the organization.

Deal fairly. Equitable treatment should extend to all, not a select few. This may include providing equal opportunity for all employees regardless of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender, national origin, age, or disability. All deserve the basic tenets of free consent, privacy, free speech, and due process.

Honor agreements. Intention is only intention, and purposefully failing to follow through on agreements constitutes an ethical oversight. This includes the spirit on the agreement in addition to the written letter. Don’t shortchange your colleagues with nitpicky alterations to agreed-upon courses of action.

Accept blame. Difficult? Yes. Critical? Yes. Acknowledging personal responsibility is a form of humility and earns the respect and admiration of friends. Ask questions to better to understand your role in an issue and publicly demonstrate your commitment to improving your future performance.

Respect the dignity of individuals by giving earned recognition. Another example of humility in action. The myriad of personalities, values, beliefs, and cultures in our workplace makes each individual contribution tantalizingly and beautifully unique. Revel in this often.

Suppress envy. Envy is sometimes referred to as counting the blessings of others instead of your own. Find comfort in the unique talents you bring to the organization and refrain from an unhealthy want of what others have. Celebrate the talents and good fortune of others. They’ll do the same for you.

Support employee development. The only untapped resource we have is the limitless talent and contributions of others. Foster this by building the next generation of managers. Provide honest appraisals, mentoring, coaching, and training. Push them to grow beyond their aspirations.

Forgive individuals. And forget. Move on. We all make mistakes and the negative vibe that surrounds our inability to forgive poisons future trust in relationships. Forgiveness allows for a second chance, and oftentimes that’s all someone needs to excel. Stay positive and give the benefit of the doubt unless actual performance dictates otherwise.

Extend self. This is the hallmark of a true leader, one who is willing to offer self in the process of supporting and growing those around them. Some call it servant leadership. Regardless of the term, it sends a strong message to others that you will provide help when it matters.

This is not an exhaustive list though we readily admire Zauderer’s contribution here. Other considerations include developing and maintaining a strong sense of emotional intelligence, especially in the areas of self-awareness and self-management. Also, we know that best practices matter, and we should learn from them. But what matters more is addressing our own thinking and striving to become as inclusive and welcoming as possible. All of these principles, combined with the those previously mentioned serve as a sound starting point for evaluation of our ethical frames.

Final Thought

Public managers are the personification of all that our constitution has come to represent—equality, representativeness, and fairness. They are the gatekeepers for dignity and grace in an ever-increasing undignified and graceless environment. It’s no mistake that they are held to a higher standard of performance than those who don’t serve the public directly. Our communities depend on the decency, fairness, and the ethical integrity of our public servants.

In 1788, James Madison wrote in *Federalist Paper No. 51*, “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.” He was on to something, despite his gender-specific prose. Madison knew that human beings were not angels by nature. Consciously or unconsciously, we must commit to a journey of ethical discernment in our thinking and behavior. When we do, our best decisions are yet to come! **PM**

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The 2020 Global Business Ethics survey revealed that one out of every five employees feel they are being asked to lower their ethical standards.



Building **PUBLIC TRUST** in Government in **Mexico**

BY OCTAVIO E.
CHAVEZ AND
SALVADOR TORRES

Promoting ethical behavior and
anti-corruption education in public
servants through specialized training



In

recent years, ICMA-México/Latinoamérica (ICMA-ML) has made significant strides in promoting the importance of public trust in Mexico through the Public Ethics Consolidation Program (PEC, or CEP in Spanish). The initiative was established by ICMA-ML and eventually supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which provided funding for its expansion. Although funding from USAID is ending, ICMA-ML will use the program's achievements to continue encouraging ethical behavior among public servants as part of its mission to promote professional management in local government.

ICMA's work in Mexico began in 1992 with a group of members from the Phoenix area who visited municipalities south of the Arizona border to provide pro bono technical assistance. Ever since, ICMA's efforts in Mexico, which would later become ICMA-ML, have permanently emphasized the relevance of public trust in government to better serve its citizens. During this time, many ICMA members have come to Mexico to share their experiences on technical issues. Invariably, as ICMA members interacted with local Mexican officials, the importance of public trust and the role of public officials in solidifying that trust were often discussed.

Countering Corruption

As corruption in Mexico escalated in the latter part of the past decade, and the movement on the part of civil society (citizens and nongovernmental organizations) to push for a national anticorruption system gained steam, ICMA-ML saw the opportunity to develop strategies and tools to promote ethical behavior among public servants. This led to the conception of the PEC program in 2016, and its launch in 2017 in the state of Quintana Roo. Later, thanks to USAID support, the program expanded to five states: Jalisco, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Baja California Sur. Between 2018 and 2020, 16 public entities have participated and over 25,000 ethical exercises have been completed by at least 8,000 public servants.

ICMA's 100 years of experience in promoting ethics in local government provided important validation for the PEC model, which emphasizes independence, confidentiality, and impartiality. In Mexico, where ethics has not been explicitly part of public service, there is somewhat of a natural resistance to participation in these types of efforts. Although there have been efforts to promote the development of a code of ethics in Mexico, it was not part of any legal mandate until the creation of the National Anticorruption System in 2016. As a result, there is limited





knowledge of and experience with how to promote and enforce ethical behavior.

The program is based on two main premises: (1) the majority of public servants want to do the right thing, and (2) there is a need to create an environment that encourages and facilitates desired conduct and that holds public servants accountable for abiding by the code of conduct. The program includes a civil society component to provide oversight to public entities to ensure that they have developed the mandated anticorruption structures, as well as mechanisms to truly promote ethical behaviors. The PEC program has developed two main instruments to work with public entities and fulfill its objectives: the Ethical Decision Exercises System and the Questions and Claims Anonymous System.

Ethical Decision Exercises System (SEDE)

The Ethical Decision Exercises System (known as SEDE in Spanish), is an online platform that allows public servants to anonymously examine various ethical dilemmas and determine the right course of action in each situation. The platform provides insight into why a selected answer is correct or not. In all cases, the participant can submit his or her comments, providing a rich analysis for further training. An independent assessment of this instrument with a sample of more than 1,000 users revealed that over 85 percent of users classify the SEDE as a good or very good tool. Initial trials showed that on average 40 percent of responses were in line with the suggested response, and as the program has progressed, that figure has been closer to 60 percent. However, this hasn't been the basis of the program's success; the focus of the SEDE is to use the responses and analysis of users to help team leaders understand the decision-making processes of their staff. The SEDE provides an opportunity for team leaders to help their staff anticipate ethical dilemmas, preparing them to exercise better judgement in reacting to those dilemmas. The fact that the SEDE is anonymous allows for this type of reflection and feedback.

Questions and Claims Anonymous System (SAADD)

The Questions and Claims Anonymous System (known as SAADD in Spanish), is an online platform that allows public servants to anonymously submit questions related to situations they know about or have direct experience with that present



Elizabeth Kellar, ICMA director of public policy, addresses an audience in Chihuahua

an ethical dilemma. Through an exchange of messages, trained advisors help SAADD users identify the ethical dilemmas associated with their questions, along with a broad overview of possible responses to the dilemma and potential consequences. Over 90 public servants have undergone training as SAADD advisors with an interactive tool developed to simulate the remote interaction with SAADD users. The system also allows for anonymous claims to be presented, which is critical in Mexico where protection for whistleblowers is practically nonexistent.

Citizen Index of Institutional Strength for Public Ethics (ICIFIEP)

The program also developed a tool for evaluating the capacity of subnational institutions (such as state and local governments) to sustain ethical conduct called the Citizen Index of Institutional Strength for Public Ethics (known as ICIFIEP in Spanish). The index, which is applied by civil society organizations with active participation of state or local government, identifies the norms, structures, and mechanisms necessary for the entity to continuously promote good ethical conduct, prevent unethical conduct, and establish corrective measures. The tool assesses nine areas: a code of ethics, guidelines of good ethical conduct, the unit responsible for promoting public ethics, the unit responsible for receiving and addressing ethical doubts and complaints, ethics committees, citizen participation, strategies for promotion and prevention, programs to strengthen public ethics, and lessons learned. The nine areas include indicators related to norms, instruments, and results. Each indicator has a value and at the end of the assessment, each entity receives a score based on a percentage of the total points the entity has gathered, divided by the total number of points possible.

ICIFIEP is a very useful tool for NGOs interested in fighting corruption. Five NGOs have already applied the index to 10 public entities; in seven of them, at least twice. The progress in the second application is notable: whereas the average of the entities evaluated the first time barely reached 18 percent of the total points possible, for the second application the average rose to 43 percent. The ICIFIEP is similar to a tool developed in 2001 by ICMA in Mexico to measure transparency in local government known as Citizens for Municipal Transparency (CIMTRA in Spanish) that 20 years later continues to be used throughout the country by NGOs (cimtra.org.mx/portal).

As part of the PEC program, ICMA-ML has also launched a broad campaign in partnership with a private sector publicity and marketing nonprofit organization in five northern states. The campaign invites both citizens and public servants to seek integrity in all that they do and demonstrates the consequences of corruption. It makes clear that integrity is the antonym of corruption, and promotes five core values that public servants should incorporate in their personal and professional conduct: honesty, responsibility, legality, respect, and impartiality. The campaign includes billboards, posters at bus stops, and social media posts aimed at the general public. The campaign also targets public entities and their digital networks and social media

Although there have been efforts to promote the development of a code of ethics in Mexico, it was not part of any legal mandate until the creation of the National Anticorruption System in 2016.



SAADD Chihuahua workshop participants

through digital posters, video clips and infographics.

The PEC program seeks to offer ways that public servants can abide by what Mark Twain said, “It is never wrong to do the right thing,” a phrase that has been echoed and demonstrated by ICMA members who have provided valuable support to ICMA-ML’s work over the years. **PM**

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TIMELINE OF THE ICMA Code of Ethics

1924

ICMA Code of Ethics adopted at the Montreal ICMA Conference.

1938

Added merit-based personnel decisions noting that “political, religious, and racial considerations” carry no weight in personnel decisions.

1952

Being competent matters. Obligation for continuous professional development added to the Code.

1969

Replaced the term “city manager” in exchange for the more inclusive reference to “member.” Reflects the addition of county managers to ICMA.

1972

The profession’s commitment to political neutrality, dropped in the 1938 revision, is back, reaffirmed in direct language.

1972

Guidelines are added to the Code to offer practical advice. Formal rules of procedure to enforce the Code were adopted by the ICMA Executive Board.

1976

As the Equal Rights Amendment is debated nationally, the Code becomes gender neutral.



97 YEARS IN THE MAKING, FOLLOW THE HISTORY OF THE ICMA CODE OF ETHICS AS IT EVOLVED OVER THE DECADES.



1995

Replaced “municipal,” which was added to be more inclusive of the membership, with “local government.”



1998

Tenet 7 was changed to emphasize the broader principle of political neutrality.

2002

Tenet 7 guidelines were amended to clarify that members “shall” not run for elected office or engage in other political activity.

2004

Sexual orientation was added to the guideline on fairness and merit in personnel practices.

2013

New Tenet 7 guideline added to reinforce that members have a right and responsibility to voice their opinion on public issues.

2015

Amended Tenet 12 to reinforce that public office is a public trust.



2017

Strengthened the profession’s commitment to integrity in Tenet 3, including guidance on workplace relationships.

2018

New guidelines on equity and inclusion as the commitment to serve the best interest of all was reinforced in Tenet 4.



2019

Conduct unbecoming of professionals was addressed in a new guideline.

2020

Tenet 5 was revised to reinforce the value of providing technical and professional advice in policy recommendations and collaboration to set goals. Tenet 6 was revised to reinforce that elected officials are accountable to the people for policy decisions. Also, the guideline on serving in conflicting roles was revised.

Ethics Enforcement FAQs

Everything you need to know
about ICMA's Code of Ethics
enforcement process

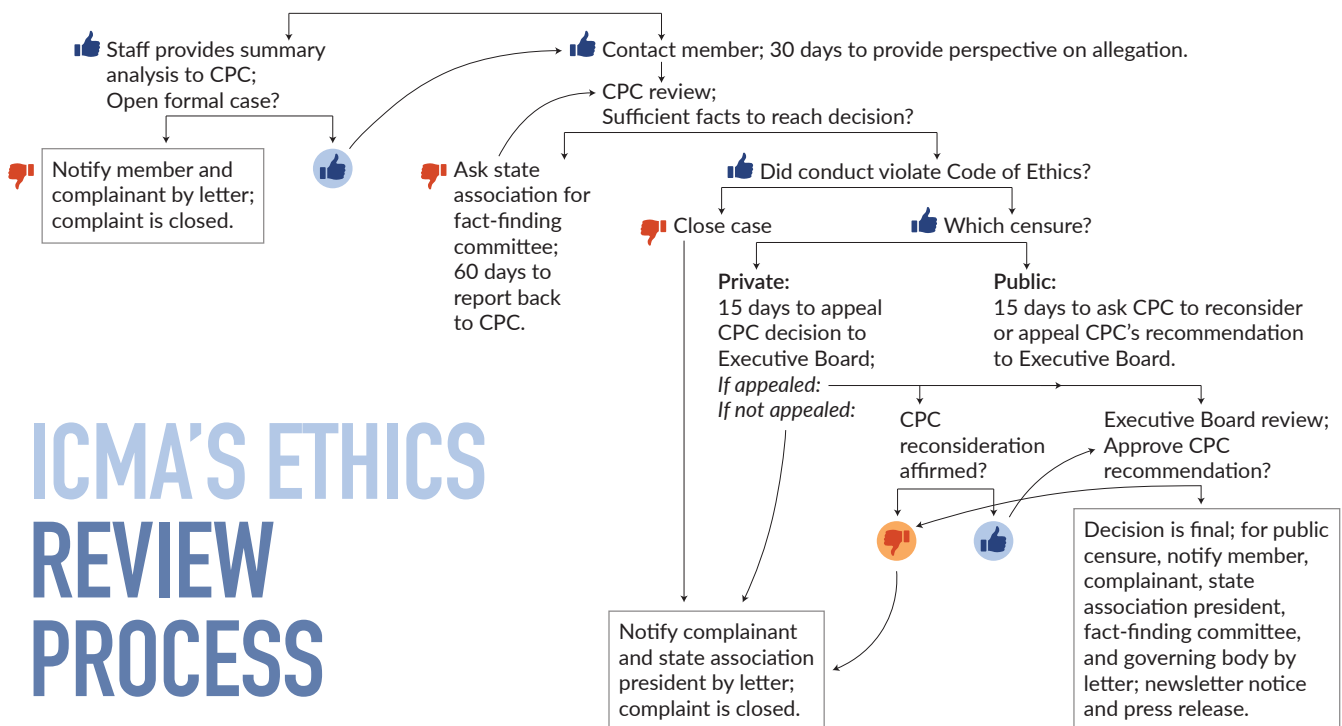
When allegations of unethical conduct by public officials go unaddressed, this can undermine the public's trust in local government and harm the reputation of the profession. One critical element of ICMA's approach to maintaining ethics within the profession is to hold our members accountable for their conduct. When a member's conduct raises ethical concerns, ICMA carries out a formal peer review process to objectively determine whether the member violated the Code.

ICMA Code of Ethics

Complaint Submission Phase 1: Staff reviews the complaint based on the Rules of Procedure criteria.

1. Did the complainant provide sufficient documentation to support the allegation(s)?
2. If the allegation(s) were proven true, would it violate the Code of Ethics?

CPC and Executive Board Review Phase 2:



ICMA'S ETHICS REVIEW PROCESS

The ICMA Constitution provides for the ICMA Executive Board to establish a standing Committee on Professional Conduct (CPC) and gives the full board the authority to adopt Rules of Procedure for Enforcement of the Code of Ethics. The board adopted the Rules formalizing the peer-review complaint process steps and timelines. The Rules authorize the CPC to investigate ethics complaints, determine when a violation of the Code has occurred, and recommend sanctions for member conduct in violation of the Code to the full board.

The following frequently asked questions provide key information about ICMA's enforcement process for members and any individuals interested in filing a complaint alleging that a member's conduct may have violated the Code.

Q: When does ICMA start an ethics review? What is required to do so?

ICMA initiates a review of a member's conduct alleged to have violated the Code when a valid complaint is filed. The complaint must be in writing, clearly describe how the complainant believes the alleged misconduct may have violated the Code, and provide documentation supporting the allegation from the complainant's perspective. Complainants can choose to remain anonymous or be named to the member as the individual filing the complaint.

Complaints can be submitted to ICMA by completing this form: icma.org/icma-ethics-complaint-submission-process. ICMA staff then review the complaint and documentation to assess whether the alleged misconduct, if proven true, could be a violation of the Code. If so, ICMA proceeds with a formal review. When a determination is needed, the CPC evaluates the complaint to reach a decision about whether to begin a formal review.

ICMA staff working on ethics issues do not initiate these reviews because their role is to administer the enforcement process and serve as the principal point of contact for members. It would be a conflict of interest to serve as both the complainant and the process administrator.

A key element of ICMA's approach to maintaining ethics within the profession is to hold members accountable for their conduct.

Q: Does ICMA tell the member a complaint has been filed?

Yes, the process is fully transparent to the member. The member is given the opportunity to review the entire complaint and all supporting documents to provide a written response to the CPC. The opportunity to explain what transpired and provide supporting documentation, as well as statements from others, is key to getting at the facts of the matter.

ICMA begins the process with the presumption that a member has conducted themselves ethically unless, and until, the facts prove otherwise and with an understanding that the information included with the complaint may be incomplete.

Q: What role does fact-finding play?

The CPC reviews the member's response and if the facts are clear, it will draw a conclusion as to whether the member's conduct violated the Code. If there are insufficient facts or the member fails to respond to ICMA's request for their perspective on the matter, the next step is for the CPC to ask the state association president to appoint a fact-finding committee of at least three ICMA members from the state where the member works or worked at the time the conduct alleged to have violated the Code occurred.

Members assigned to the fact-finding committee offer the member the opportunity to meet with them, and may interview others connected to the case, as well as collect public records, and in a situation involving legal matters, obtain court records. The fact-finding committee is not asked to determine whether the member's conduct has violated the Code. Once the fact-finding committee submits its findings to the CPC for review in a summary report, a copy of the report is provided to the member to provide any written comments on the report to the CPC.

Q: Does ICMA share that it is investigating an allegation of a member's misconduct?

The entire review process is confidential, unless and until it results in the board's finding a member's conduct has violated the Code and the appropriate sanction is a public one. Absent that, ICMA does not comment that a member's conduct may be under review and every ICMA member involved in the process must maintain confidentiality about the matter under review.

Q: What factors are considered in reaching a decision on a member's conduct?

ICMA's ethics review decisions are based on established facts. In reaching the determination of whether the member's conduct violated the Code, examples of the factors that may be considered include the nature and willfulness of the violation, if the member had any prior ethics violations, and the level of the member's professional or public responsibility.

Q: What are the penalties?

If the CPC concludes the member's conduct violated the Code, it can select from an array of sanctions, including

private censure, public censure, suspension from membership for up to five years, permanent membership expulsion or bar, and credential revocation. All of the options beyond a private censure require the full board's approval. The member has the right to appeal any sanction to the board and request a hearing before the board in an executive session.

Q: If a member resigns from ICMA, does the ethics complaint process end?

No. Once ICMA initiates an ethics review, it will continue the process to its conclusion; however, ICMA cannot open a case about a former member's alleged conduct unless that individual agrees to participate.

Q: How long does the process take to conclude?

The deliberative nature of the process ensures the case is handled fairly with the understanding that the outcome may impact the member's professional reputation and has the potential to affect the member's governing body, the community where the member works or worked, and the local government management profession.

The Rules provide deadlines to keep the review moving forward in a timely manner. A resolution is reached for most complaints in about six months from the time a complete complaint is submitted to ICMA. There are some circumstances when it may take longer, such as when the complainant provides incomplete documentation to proceed or if pending legal matters or other circumstances result in a delay in ascertaining the facts about the member's conduct.

Q: How is the outcome publicized?

ICMA notifies the complainant and the state association president that the matter has been resolved. When the individuals involved are members, ICMA shares what factors were considered in reaching the decision. If the individual submitting a complaint is not a member, ICMA has no mechanism to enforce the confidentiality of the outcome so in this situation the complainant is notified only that the ethics review is complete.

Beyond notification to the aforementioned individuals, a private censure receives no public comment from ICMA.

A public censure notice goes to the complainant, the state association president, the appropriate governing body, and a press release is shared with local news media and with all members via the ICMA newsletter.

Questions

If you have any questions about ICMA's ethics enforcement process, please contact Jessica Cowles, ethics advisor, at jcowles@icma.org or 202-962-3513; or Martha Perego, director of member services and ethics, at mperego@icma.org or 202-962-3668. **PM**



JUST RELEASED!

GOVERNING FOR EQUITY: Implementing an Equity Lens in Local Governments

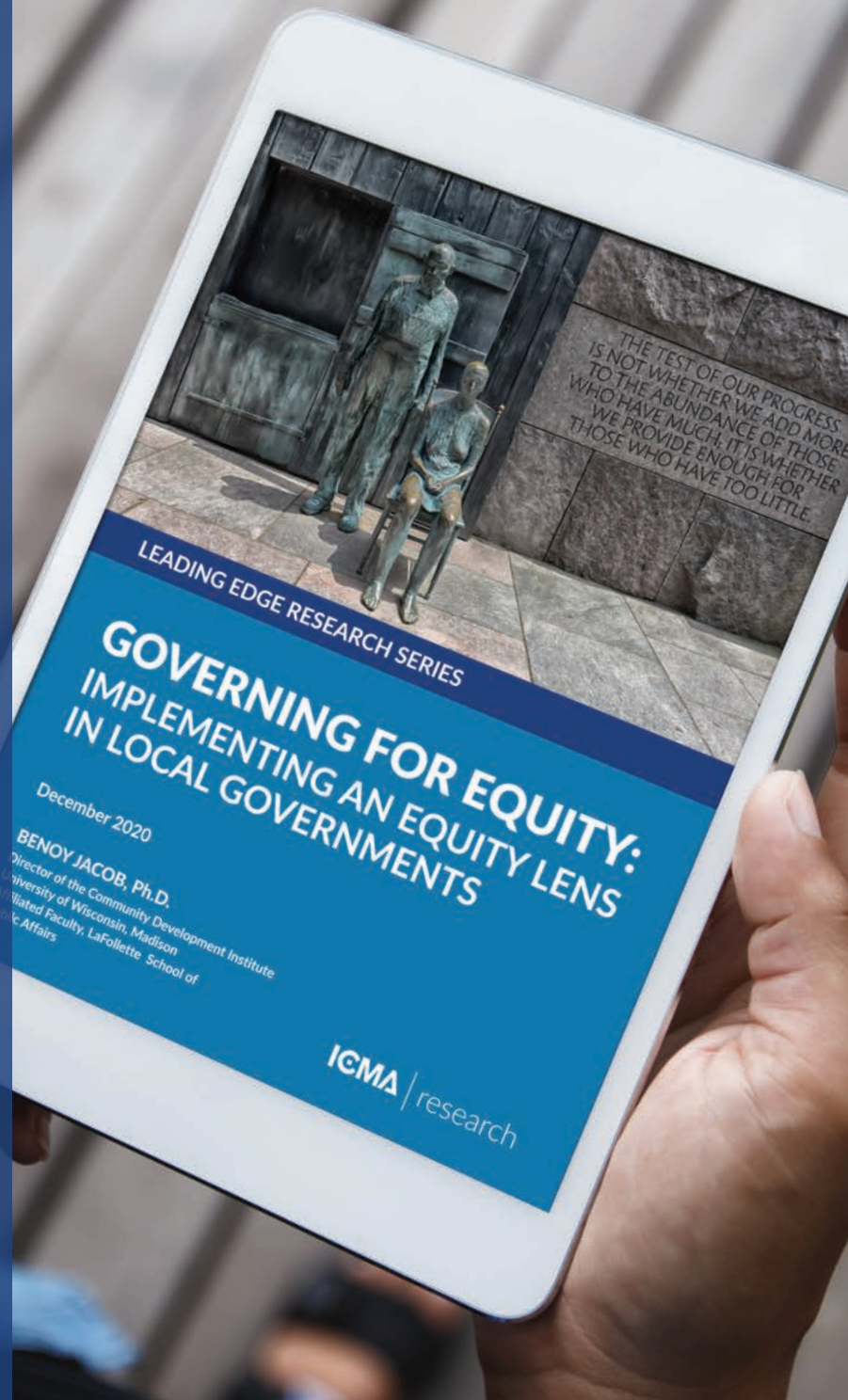
BENOY JACOB, PhD
ICMA Research Fellow

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
[**icma.org/governing-for-equity**](https://icma.org/governing-for-equity)



ICMA Local Government Research Fellowship

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).

ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines

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

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

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

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

GUIDELINE

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

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

GUIDELINES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

improperly influenced in the performance of their official duties.

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

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

Tenet 4. Serve the best interests of the people.

GUIDELINES

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

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

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

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

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

GUIDELINES

Elections of the Governing Body.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GUIDELINES

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

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

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

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

GUIDELINE

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

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

GUIDELINE

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

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

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

GUIDELINES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Persevere and Thrive Through Economic Challenges



Local governments and their employees have demonstrated time and time again that they can be resilient and adaptable when faced with new challenges—and ICMA has a wealth of resources that can help. We scoured *Public Management (PM)* magazine to identify the most important archived articles to help your organization and community persevere and thrive through these economic challenges.

What's inside:

- Learn lessons from previous recessions that affected local government.
- Reshape your local government and build employee spirit, passion, and commitment, and ultimately, organizational capacity.
- Gain leadership strategies to help your organization in the midst of turmoil and fear, and in the process, demonstrate your value.
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Leading in an Economic Downturn

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What is Leadership?

LEADERSHIP PARADOXES

Reading the situation, remaining flexible, and managing around your weaknesses

BY ED EVERETT, ICMA-CM

Leadership is as much about being flexible as it is about being decisive. Effective leadership behavior requires understanding and managing a series of paradoxes. Successful leaders understand these paradoxes and are flexible enough to modify their preferred behavior based

on specific situations. These paradoxes are part of the leadership art of influencing and encouraging others to help move an organization and community to a better place.

What are some examples of leadership paradoxes?

First, what is a paradox? A paradox is defined as a statement that contradicts itself. Paradoxical thinking is a process in which you

identify and define contrasting characteristics of a problem or issue.

Leadership is not about a specific way of acting. Rather, a successful leader behaves in different ways at different times based on different situations.

Examples of leadership paradoxes:

- Humility versus confidence.
- Confident versus arrogant.
- Innovation versus chaos.
- Caring about employees versus willing to fire employees.
- Listening/learning versus making a decision.
- Urgency versus patience.

- Audacious versus foolish.
- Wanting facts versus taking action.
- Empathy versus firmness.
- Being liked versus being respected.

I am sure you can think of others. Effective leaders who understand themselves know they must be flexible and hence know when they:

- Are being too humble and not exuding enough confidence.
- Are pushing so much innovation that they are causing chaos in their organization.



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A successful leader behaves in different ways at different times based on different situations.

- Should move from acting with urgency to being more patient.
- Should listen more or when it is time to act.

There is no formula for deciding where to be on these paradoxes. Effective leaders are able to read the situation and understand where they should be on any given paradox given a specific situation.

Exercise

1. Choose two paradoxes that give you the most trouble. For example, one paradox that can often get me into trouble is urgency versus patience as I am not a patient person.
2. Develop one or two action steps you can take to prevent each paradox from tripping you up in the future.

The 50–30–20 Percent Portrait of Leadership

If we all got together in one room, we could easily develop a consensus of 20 essential leadership attributes. It is my belief—based on my personal experience, observing effective leaders, and reading about great leaders—that no leader excels at all 20 attributes. Effective leaders are:

- Great at about 50 percent of the identified leadership attributes.
- Good at about 30 percent of the identified leadership attributes.
- Inadequate at about 20 percent of the identified leadership attributes or approximately three to five of these attributes depending on the exact percent.

(The percentages are approximate: plus or minus five percent or so.)

How can a leader be successful and also be terrible at three to five of the leadership attributes? Effective leaders know themselves well, including their strengths and weaknesses.

Leaders understand and are comfortable with the fact that:

- No one is perfect and no one has all necessary skill sets.
- No one can change their basic personality. (Refer to your enneagram, mentioned in Part 2 of this series.)

So accept your humanness and admit your failings and weaknesses and manage around them.

How Do Leaders “Manage Around” Weaknesses?

You can try to be great at everything, but that will be about as fruitful as beating your head against the wall. A more effective way is to manage around these weaknesses by delegating the leadership attributes you are not good at to someone who is good at that trait.

Two examples of “managing around” from my own personal experience:

- I hated and wasn’t very good at the “care and feeding” of councilmembers, which is an attribute that could have been terminal to my career. I assigned a few of my best department heads to stay closely connected to specific councilmembers. The councilmembers’ needs were met, and I wasn’t spending all my time doing something I didn’t like to do and didn’t always do very well. I had one very firm rule: the assigned department heads had to keep me well informed of

their discussions with their councilmembers.

- I was not every good at celebrating successes, so I assigned someone on my management team who excelled at this.

You need to figure out your own way to manage around your weaknesses instead of stressing over them. Confident leaders know what they are not good at and manage around those things.

Exercise

1. Identify the leadership attributes you are not good at or hate doing.
2. Choose at least two of these that you will begin to manage around.
3. Ask someone or several people in your organization to be responsible for ensuring these leadership attributes are being covered.

Modifying Your Behavior

Most leaders want to modify a few of their behaviors to be more effective. However almost no one can change their behavior, their habits, or their comfort zone by themselves, as I discussed in the previous article. All of us, including successful leaders, need help to change or modify our habits or behaviors. For example, I was a strong city manager with strong opinions, but I was also very impatient. Therefore, I asked someone on my management team to provide me with

feedback after each meeting on how I was doing with listening to others and encouraging them to share ideas. Over time I got much better at listening, as well as including my less extroverted department heads in discussions more often.

Figure out who you need to ask to help you with modifying specific behaviors.

Summary

- Leadership paradoxes are real, and you need to identify which ones trip you up.
- Successful leaders know where they want to be on each paradox depending on the specific situation.
- No one is perfect and leaders are terrible at about 20 percent of the essential leadership traits.
- Successful leaders “manage around” their weaknesses.
- Get help from other people when you are trying to improve your behavior.
- None of this is easy! Allow yourself to make mistakes in your initial steps.

These pointers should make leadership less stressful and more fun. **RM**

ED EVERETT, ICMA-CM,

is a consultant and former city manager, Redwood City, California. In 2007, he received ICMA’s Award for Career Excellence in Memory of Mark E. Keane. (everetted@comcast.net)



BY RANDALL
REID |

MANAGING VACCINE

DISTRIBUTION FOR THE COMMON GOOD

7

strategic
lessons for
managing a
scarce resource



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The pandemic has presented many challenges for local government administrators over the past months as the magnitude and persistence of the virus has dominated our consciousness and daily activities. Recent innovations of new vaccines have given our residents hope and there is a growing consensus that the global challenge of widespread vaccination is critical to defeating this enemy and regaining any sense of normalcy for our communities.

This Isn't Unprecedented

The magnitude of the task of vaccinating 330 million Americans seems overwhelming. As the vaccine supply slowly becomes more available, local managers are inevitably concerned with the effective distribution of the vaccine supplies that are available for their residents, as citizens and media second guess if government is up to the task. Yet there remains a generation among us with a circular scar on our upper arm—a reminder of how another government-conducted mass vaccination program defeated polio, an earlier deadly disease in the 1950s. History can repeat itself; government can prove worthy of the task ahead.

Local government managers can do little about the limited supply of vaccines except to lobby and advocate for the

urgency of supplies, logistics, and accurate assessments of the need for vaccines for all our citizens. The distribution process will benefit from more intentional and assertive involvement of our local governments within our health care systems to assure the best process management and service delivery is utilized to distribute vaccines. Fortunately, local government managers have transferrable practices and skills that they can contribute to an equitable, efficient roll out of local community vaccination programs.

COVID vaccines represent in economic theory a scarce public resource, one with a finite supply due to limited supply chain availability and time-restricted value due to expiration. For example, consider post-disaster free water and ice distribution; social service food pantry operations; processes to equably allow access to community facilities such as park shelters or appointments for tee times, campsites or wedding venues in parks; capacity limitations on white-water rapids, beaches, or trail systems; and even triage of individuals in emergency medical disasters or for life-saving organ replacement in hospitals.

The critical difference in the case of mass vaccination programs is that COVID vaccines are issued free, and their use is of health benefit to the entire community if the critical herd immunity levels are reached expeditiously. The “common good” of rapid deployment of free vaccines

to save lives in this health care crisis, unlike most common governmental activities, serves to limit the use of market pricing or user fees and charges traditionally used to adjust demands on public resources like potable water or tennis courts.

Lessons for Handling Vaccination Programs

Recent experience shows public managers should strategically consider seven lessons we have learned from other local government service delivery practices to better handle our vaccination programs.

1 Collaboration: Effective mass vaccination programs in a health crisis require the collaboration of multiple government agencies and partnerships with the private sector and civic groups. Local government managers can facilitate this collaboration by personal example and community outreach, much like the local coordination in preparing for the Census we all use. Citizen coordinating committees can encourage and educate the public to increase participation in vaccination programs using local influencers and trusted leaders.

2 Strategic Focus: Local government managers have positional authority to convene gatherings of community leaders to overcome the distribution challenges by identifying functional silos or breakdowns in community



Senior Citizens, the Digital Divide, and COVID Vaccine Registration

Local governments make extra efforts to ensure vulnerable residents aren't left behind

**BY PATRICIA VINCHESI, ICMA-CM
ICMA NORTHEAST
REGIONAL DIRECTOR**

A priority population in early vaccine rollout, many senior citizens faced obstacles to accessing systems overly reliant on technology or specific communication methods. To fill this gap, adult children, caregivers, family friends, and others began making arrangements for their parents and other loved ones to register and obtain the vaccine. Even for those with some technological acumen, this process was fraught with difficulties and frustrations.

For those without someone to shepherd them through the process, local governments once again developed innovative ways to reach out to the community to take care of their residents. Most communities have excellent data on how many seniors they have and where they live. Employees know best practices for locating and scheduling senior services.

Hanover, New Hampshire (Julia Griffin, town manager, population 8,508), in accordance with state guidance and with members of its UV Public Health Region covering 12 communities, developed a multi-pronged program to reach those seniors with least access to the distribution system and link them to supportive staff and resources. They worked to identify seniors living in congregate settings (i.e., retirement communities, HUD-subsidized housing facilities) or alone that were not capable of registering for the vaccine or scheduling an appointment online. Staff also identified a key contact in each of the town's senior residences—those complexes that serve seniors but are not congregate or assisted living facilities and were not, therefore, vaccinated as part of the first phase of the state's roll out. Recognizing that many seniors have technology challenges or do not receive the town's standard e-alerts, they are also reached out to key contacts in the

community such as local physicians and clergy to support their outreach. The town's goal was to have individuals who would act as a communication conduit, who could help fellow residents get registered, and who would work with town officials as it set up a mobile vaccination unit of firefighter/paramedics and other medical volunteers from the Medical Reserve Corps to bring vaccine shots to the residents.

The city of Oakland Park, Florida (David Hebert, city manager, population 45,202), established a closed vaccination point of distribution (POD) site at a local community center. The city was able to acquire a share of vaccines from the Broward County Department of Health for distribution specifically to vulnerable seniors. Rather than generally advertising this service and risk overwhelming the system with inquiries, including from those outside the intended population, city staff conducted targeted outreach to vulnerable residents lacking access to technology or transportation. Flyers in multiple languages were distributed through churches and nonprofits, and letters from the city manager were mailed directly to senior residents identified through property records and partners' mailing lists. Staff and volunteers of Oakland Park's Coronavirus Call Center, established in March 2020, facilitated appointment scheduling, reminders, and a waitlist. Initial efforts successfully distributed 100 percent of the vaccines acquired, and Oakland Park's approach has since been expanded to several other neighboring cities.

While each state varies in terms of how vaccines will be distributed, many local governments are receiving doses directly and are using these and other communication methods to ensure no eligible residents fall through the cracks.

systems and to promote a shared strategy and coordinated community response. Invoking a formal all-hazards emergency operations plan or creating a temporary civic command center to centralize the vaccine response are means by which local governments have developed shared strategies and metrics while coordinating diverse participation of community resources, respondents, and volunteers.

3 Clarity of Message:

Communication in a crisis is critical, particularly in a partisan environment that exists today. The unique community process for individual citizens to obtain the vaccines needs to be communicated accurately and clearly, through traditional and social media and release of information designed to inspire trust in the process. The loss of localized media outlets and power of social media to create disinformation needs to be directly countered by local outreach of trusted and visible community leaders.

4 Resource Alignment:

Assessment of your total community assets and resources is critical to assuring that appropriate strategies, staffing, and technologies are aligned with distribution goals for maximum success. Resources include not only medical facilities but also civic and private facilities that can be adapted for distribution points and corporate resources, retired medical personnel, and faith-based networks for



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volunteers. Healthcare and public employees are essential but not all are front line, so be sure your internal vaccine policies are clear and aligned with relevant state and federal guidelines.

5 Process Planning:

Regularly reassess the optimal vaccine distribution process, potential weak points, and resource requirements. Distribution can be done by first come, first served or by appointment, or by a hybrid of both techniques. Reservation systems may be online or by phone and in person but potential frustration of clients needs to be recognized in each case and the technology, time required, and staffing demanded made available for optimal customer convenience and safety. Where breakdowns occur in processing, agile realignment can be implemented and reported. Proactively anticipate potential pain points specific to targeted populations as you progress through priority groups (see the sidebar on page 38). Is broadband available for online registration? Is public transportation available to vaccination locations?

6 Accountability:

Where distribution is occurring at decentralized

sites or executed by multiple participating partners, an effort must be taken to establish and insure standard operating procedures, inventory audits, and chain of custody of vaccines. Written procedures remain best practice and facilitate assurance of trained staffing and that supervisory personnel adhere to them. Are CDC advisory vaccination guidelines or the proper scientific protocols being employed for safety and to prevent further spread of the virus?

7 Equitable Implementation:

Equitable and ethical distribution of vaccines are a moral imperative that may require that public administrators personally assure the distribution processes selected serve all neighborhoods, minorities, and special care populations. Does monitoring exist to prevent inappropriate jumping in line or encourage multiple registrations? Are vaccination facilities in minority neighborhoods?

Stewardship of Public Health

During 2020, the pandemic vividly demonstrated to a frustrated and fearful citizenry that solving complex health problems like COVID-19 requires both competent

public leadership and effective management. The November election may have turned on the issue of perceptions of an inept federal response to COVID; we now have a new President who promises to “manage the hell out” of the federal distribution process. As professional managers, we should renew our efforts to assist this national management challenge and build community capacity to see these vaccines make it “the last mile” and into the arms of all our residents.

COVID vaccine distribution remains a great challenge but this is not the last public health emergency we are likely to face. Pandemics, like hundred-year floods, can reoccur at any time. The fear of COVID has caused other potential individual healthcare crises by the delay of immunizations, particularly in children of preschool age and delay of preventative treatment of sick and elderly patients. This will create long-term health care issues affecting all of us for decades to come.

Community health is a shared public interest and part of the “commons” we share as citizens. Stewardship and concern for community public health is an important legacy for any public official. The next few months will not be easy. But take heart; we know how to do this and can teach others from the best practices we understand about quality service delivery. **RM**

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Employee Engagement through Giving

Give employees the **chance** to fully be themselves | BY NINA VETTER

Employee engagement and commitment is crucial to the success of every local government organization. Improving the levels of employee engagement is often a goal and a work in progress for local government leadership. While there is no right answer, the most accessible and easiest option you have for engaging your team is by giving your employees the chance to be themselves.

It sounds so incredibly simple, but it works. In my new book, *Give*, I talk about how this simple concept of approaching every small moment in the day with an attitude and mindset of giving can change how you lead and how you serve your partners in work and life.

If you see, hear, or witness that part of your team isn't truly engaged in the work, recognize that your most valuable asset is the people who haven't been given a chance to shine or really show their full potential. When we hire someone, we teach them literally how to do every aspect of the job. In doing so, we are trying to be helpful, but we're really not letting our new employee be themselves. Rather, give your employees the respect, the opportunity, and the commitment to let them do things their way and let them tackle new challenges. Give them the chance to fully be themselves.

Years ago, I worked with an analyst who didn't really enjoy the work, frequently got feedback that she didn't provide what was really expected, and was searching for other opportunities. I got lunch with her to give her the opportunity to share where she thought she excelled, where she could shine best, and what she enjoyed. As

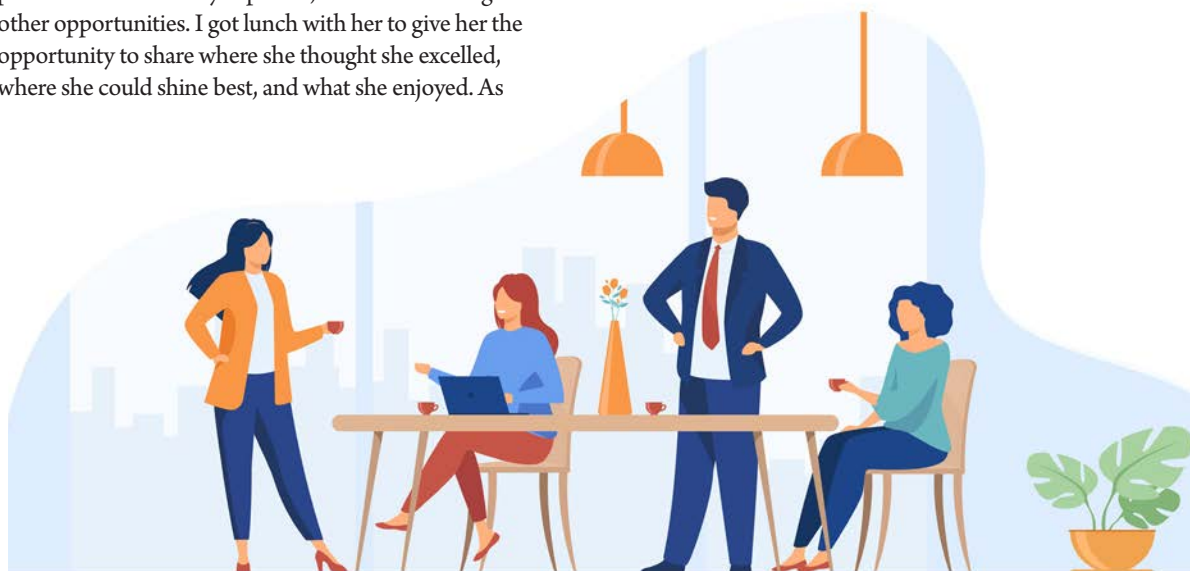
it turned out, her passion and skills were in teaching and collaborating with others—not spreadsheets—and her job had her working alone in spreadsheets all day. I talked to her supervisor and got approval for her to teach a class to help other employees in process improvement. She was much happier and productive at work—all as a result of giving.

Recently, we went through a major overhaul of our development review processes. One of my directors was concerned about the potential attitude of one employee who hadn't changed her processes for at least five years. We gave her a chance to talk us through her process and we just asked questions. We discovered that she does things the way she does because someone told her to ten years ago, and she had never been told she could just change the process if she thought there was a better way. Someone just needed to give her the responsibility, authority, and the opportunity to improve things on her own.

Giving someone the chance to be themselves takes time. It requires leadership to take the time to sit down with each employee and understand who they are, what they want, what they are great at, and why they do what they do. Slowing down and understanding and giving your team the opportunity to do their thing often is just what you need to move your organization forward. **PM**



NINA VETTER is district manager, Pueblo West Metropolitan District, Colorado. Learn more about how giving in small ways can transform your leadership and relationships at work in her book, *Give*, available on Amazon.



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My Experience Serving as an *ICMA Welcome Ambassador*

Making **valuable** connections one new member at a time | BY MONICA SPELLS

Being an ICMA Welcome Ambassador

enhances your membership with opportunities throughout the year to build your peer network throughout the nation and beyond. You can interact with dozens of new members and help make an association with more than 12,000 members feel smaller and navigable.

Wanting to enhance my membership experience and expand my professional network, I volunteered for the Welcome Ambassadors Committee a few years ago. In reviewing volunteer options, I remembered my appreciation for being welcomed into such a large association when I was unsure of how to make the most of my ICMA membership and wanted to return the kindness.

Lifestyle entrepreneur and bestselling author Lewis Howes has said that one of the most powerful networking practices is to provide immediate value to a new connection. I found that one way to do so included using the six degrees of separation approach to see whether a new member and I had mutual acquaintances within ICMA's membership. Often, we did and, in fact, shared a few. A favorite memory occurred during my time working for a county in South Carolina. My monthly member contact list included a new member who had recently accepted a position in Virginia. The county executive hiring her had previously served as an executive for my organization. We made an immediate connection that included feedback on my experience working with him that hopefully allowed her to have some additional insight into adjusting to her new role. Fast-forward three years from that exchange, I found myself working in a neighboring county to hers in Virginia. This time, she was able to help me, reinforcing



Call for Volunteers 2021: ICMA believes that it is important to provide members with the opportunity to contribute to the profession by volunteering to serve on ICMA member committees, task forces, and advisory boards. This year's Call for Volunteers opens mid-March.

the benefit of peer-to-peer outreach afforded through the Welcome Ambassadors platform.

I also connected with a student member enrolled in the MPA program that I completed years ago. Beyond the obvious connection of an alma mater and shared campus experience, the more substantive discussion involved translating his graduate school experience and degree into a local government career. As we know, local government is on the front line of the COVID-19 crisis and other significant challenges facing our communities. Peer-to-peer connections can serve as a reminder that we are part of a larger picture and community, giving real meaning to mantras like "we are all in this together."

Welcoming new members into the profession and into ICMA is needed more than ever right now to share what we know, develop and build collegiality, and sustain and strengthen our passion for our work and commitment to serve. **PM**



MONICA SPELLS, MPA, ICMA-CM, is an assistant county administrator for Loudoun County, Virginia. She served as a Welcome Ambassador from 2017 to 2019, and currently serves as co-chair for the 2019-2021 ICMA Advisory Board for Deputies and Assistants. (monica.spells@loudoun.gov)

Bondurant Ultra High-Pressure Program

Advancing firefighting capabilities, reducing response times, and decreasing operation costs

Bondurant, Iowa—2020 Recipient, Program Excellence Award, Community Health and Safety (Under 10,000 Population)

Bondurant, the fastest-growing city in Iowa, has a mix of paid-per-call (PPC) and full-time fire fighters. Because the city had difficulty recruiting PPC firefighters for daytime service, response time to daytime incidents suffered, with a negative effect on ISO ratings.

Seeking to reduce fire response times, four members of Bondurant Emergency Services attended a summit in 2017 to learn about ultra-high pressure (UHP) technology. When water is flowed at these pressures, 10 times the surface area is created by breaking down conventional water droplets into 64 smaller droplets, decreasing the water used to approximately a fifth of what conventional firefighting would use. Greater surface area means more contact with the fire and more efficient heat absorption.

Bondurant Emergency Services leadership was persuaded that UHP could help reduce response times, leading the city decided to retrofit two existing vehicles at an initial cost of less than \$55,000.

One was a 2006 brush truck, retrofitted with 200 gallons of water and a standard UHP system that supplies 20 gallons a minute through a three-quarter-inch hydraulic steel braided hose that is much easier to control and



manipulate than the traditional hand line. It delivers a pressure of 1,400 psi.

The second unit is a 100-gallon system designed for the command truck, with a topper and heater for cold weather (the first in the nation). It is a take-home vehicle so that one person can respond directly to the scene, expediting a fire attack while the larger apparatus and personnel respond from the station, thus cutting time to get water on the fire.

In addition to reducing response time, the UHP system uses water more efficiently, decreasing residual water,

thereby causing less damage and restoring occupancy more quickly. It has improved response to brush and vehicle fires. Vehicle fires can be extinguished by just one person. Decreased water use means less runoff and environmental contamination.

UHP technology does not replace pumpers or engines, but employing UHP technology enables the city to extend their life by utilizing smaller vehicles for the initial attack, resulting in less deterioration of the larger units. In Bondurant, adopting UHP added five years to the replacement cycle for two of its

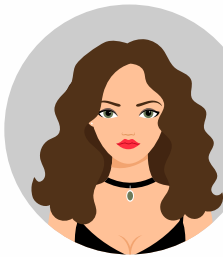
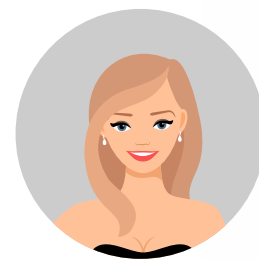
frontline pumper tankers.

Bondurant staff have been so impressed by the UHP systems that they developed a training team that travels the state. (They do not charge, and the training is not affiliated with any manufacturer.) The city also shared its experience by presenting a well-attended UHP educational summit featuring nationally known fire service leaders.

This was all done with a goal of advancing firefighting capabilities, reducing response times, and decreasing long-term fire operation costs, not only in Bondurant but also in Iowa and even nationally. **PM**



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT:
WOMEN
INFLUENCING
LOCAL
GOVERNMENT



THE PATH TO DEVELOPING WOMEN CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS

An in-depth look at ways to increase
the number of women in local
government executive positions





According to a 2020 CNBC.com article, "...Retaining and promoting female talent is more than just a diversity issue. According to McKinsey & Company data, it's also a critical business issue: \$4.3 trillion can be added to the country's economy if gender parity is reached by 2025."¹

In a recent article in the *New York Times*, the author explained that the reason women-led nations were doing better with COVID-19 is because of their leadership style. "Male leaders can overcome gendered expectations, of course, and many have. But it may be less politically costly for women to do so because they do not have to violate perceived gender norms to adopt cautious, defensive policies.... What we learned with [the COVID-19 pandemic] is that...perhaps people will learn to recognize and value risk-averse, caring, and thoughtful leaders."²

During the 2019–2020 Florida City and County Management Association (FCCMA) program year, one of President Shannon Lewis's initiatives was to encourage the promotion of women into local government executive positions. President Lewis designated the two of us, long-time Florida managers, as co-chairs in developing an initiative to increase the number of women in local government executive positions in Florida.

Background

In 2018, FCCMA conducted a diversity survey of their membership. Only 25 percent of the "full" members were female. At the time, full membership was restricted to chief appointed officials (CAOs) and the deputy or assistant CAO. There was a more even split between males and females in the affiliate category, which consisted of all other local government employees or those employed by a not-for-profit agency, association, university, etc. Forty-five percent of the affiliate members were female. Based on that study, it would seem that while there are women serving in local government in Florida, they are not progressing to top leadership positions.

Efforts within Florida local government circles to encourage more female leadership have been ongoing for many years. One effort, a 2018 article co-authored by Hannah-Spurlock and Dr. Robert E. Lee, assistant professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Florida Gulf Coast

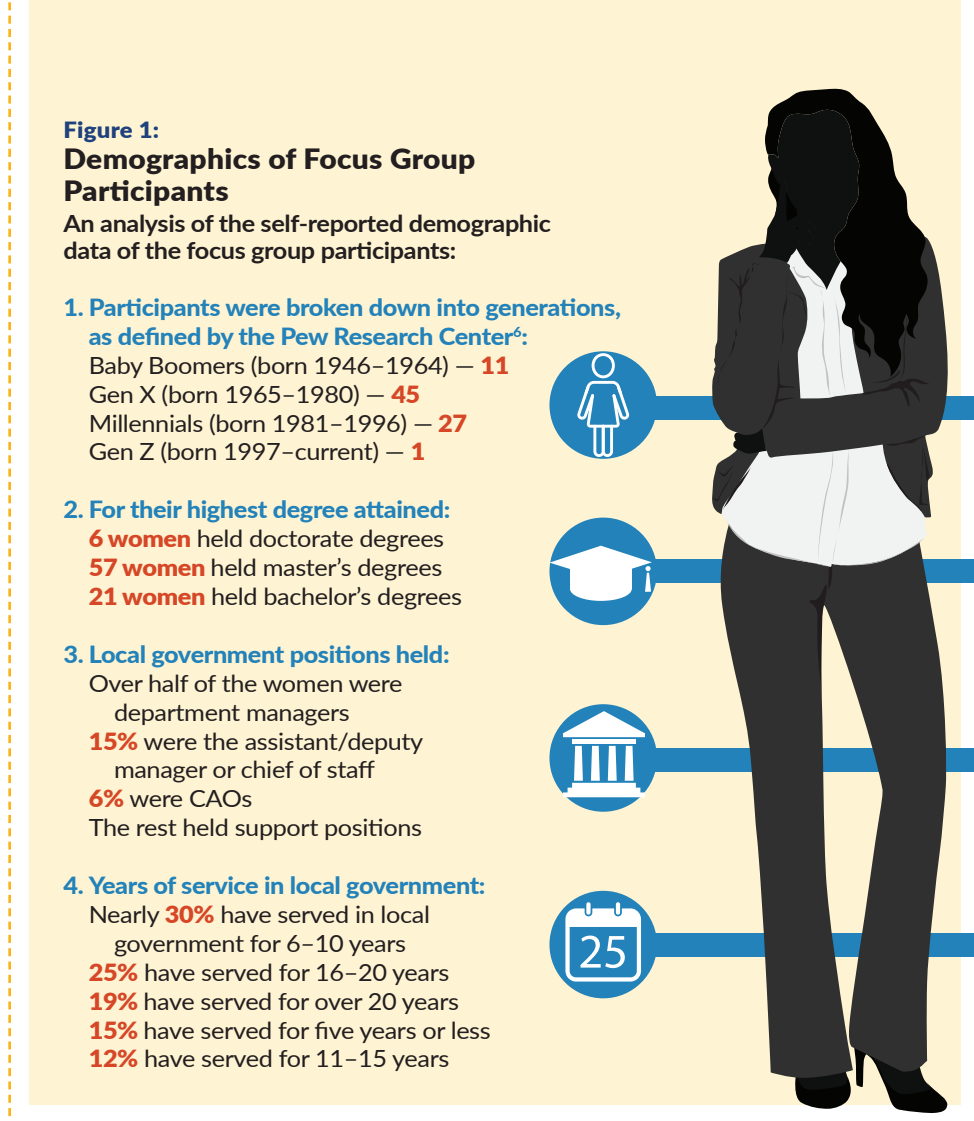
University, and former Florida city manager, examined factors that influenced women's rise to the CAO position.³ It cited a statistic pulled

**BY SARAH HANNAH-SPURLOCK, ICMA-CM;
AND JILL SILVERBOARD, ICMA-CM**

from the 2012 ICMA State of the Profession survey, that nearly three-fourths of MPA graduates are women, yet only 19.8 percent of chief appointed officers are women. The article examined the reasons why there weren't more female CAOs based on research about women executives across multiple industries and a study we conducted of the selection process for 26 female local government manager appointments in Florida that occurred between the years 2012 and 2016. The study was based on a previously published study in the Harvard Business Review that examined university faculty

A proposed goal is to increase the percentage of women in CAO positions in Florida to 50% by the year 2026.

appointments.⁴ The authors concluded that the chances of a female hire increased significantly the more women there were in the finalist pool. Our research showed some support for the hypothesis. Also interesting was that 30 percent of the appointments in the Florida study involved the promotion of a female into the manager position from another position in the organization. Additionally, the Florida study found that the gender make-up of the elected body affected the outcome of the selection. Three-fourths of the appointing boards included at least one female member and of those, about 60 percent included two female members.



The 2019–2020 Process

To begin our effort, we sought to collect data directly from women in different stages of their local government career to hear about their professional aspirations, as well as what hurdles and challenges they experience in that journey. We believed that learning this might provide valuable insight into our profession and establish a platform from which to develop strategies. We decided to collect this information by conducting focus groups of women in local government. In order to reach women all over the state, focus groups were held in nine locations (pre-pandemic) and one virtual session. The focus group sessions were about 90 minutes long and facilitated by women local government managers prepared to lead

the conversations without influencing the dialogue. A total of 84 women participated. See Figure 1 for an analysis of the self-reported demographic data of the focus group participants.

During the sessions, participants were asked four questions:

- How many of you:
 - Aspire to be (or already are) a city or county CAO or another chartered officer?
 - Aspire to be an assistant/deputy manager or department head?
 - Aspire to be something other than a or b?
 - Don't know for sure what your aspiration is?
- If you are the CAO of your agency, describe your path to that position.

- If you are not the CAO of your agency, describe your path to that position.
- If you do not see the CAO position in your career path, please elaborate on your decision.

Focus Group Findings

Thirty participants aspired to be or already are a CAO or chartered officer. Fifty-two participants aspire to be an assistant/deputy manager or department head. Nine participants aspire to be something other than a CAO, ACM or department head, and five women were undecided about their career goal. Some participants voted for more than one of the options.

Unfortunately, not many female CAOs participated in the focus groups so we weren't

able to determine a “normal” or “traditional” path for women to this position. Although, like the data we collected showing a significant number of women chosen through promotion versus a competitive selection process, most of the women who participated in the focus group were appointed through promotion or a non-competitive selection.

The responses for the questions regarding challenges perceived to achieve the CAO position and the reasons why participants were not interested in becoming the CAO were similar. The responses can be divided into two major categories: one involves work-life balance and the other involves gender-related biases and presuppositions.

Work-Life Balance

In this category, themes that appeared as challenges to becoming or reasons for not choosing to be a CAO in most if not all the focus group sessions involved family, the political role of a CAO, and job security. The participants felt as though prioritizing their family made it difficult if not impossible to be a successful and effective CAO. Many felt like they needed to be there for their kids, or they didn’t want to leave the community where they are raising their families. Participant quotes included:

- “I feel guilty when I work too many late nights. If I did what the city manager does, I would have nothing left for my family.”
- “While my kids were growing up, I didn’t feel able to both be a city manager and be a good parent.”
- “Women have to make more of a choice than men between career and children.”



Many were not interested in having to deal with the political dynamics of the CAO position. These dynamics included managing difficult elected officials, the expectation of 24-hour availability and lack of work-life balance, and being the public face of controversial issues. Participant quotes included:

- “I don’t like being in the spotlight. I like being behind the scenes.”
- “I don’t want to have to be available 24/7.”
- “There is no personal or professional life. It’s all just one big life.”

Participants were also concerned about job security. In addition, they felt like women are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to proving oneself and the allowance to make mistakes.

- “As the assistant, I don’t worry as much about getting fired.”
- “Men don’t feel threatened because they run things and they know it.”
- “We as women are too afraid to make a mistake.”
- “Women are given tasks to try to see if we can be successful, but then there is no push to promote.”

Other Gender-Related Challenges

Other common themes that were shared by many women included the belief that they didn’t have the right skills, education, or enough experience to be a CAO; that the networking and mentoring opportunities for women are lacking; and that there is bias among peers, staff, and elected officials.

Several years ago, Hewlett-Packard wrote a report that discussed why women weren’t in top management positions.⁵ They learned that women

applied for a promotion when they believed they met 100 percent of the qualifications listed for the job. Men would apply when they thought they only met 60 percent of the requirements. Focus group responses seemed to support this conclusion. Among the quotes heard:

- “I’m always like ‘oh no, someone is going to figure out I’m not qualified.’”
- “My skill set is not a good fit to be the CAO.”
- “The CAO must be well-rounded and fully understand all department operations and types of services.”
- “Women feel like they must be exceptional—not just qualified—to be considered for a position.”

A lack of mentoring and networking opportunities was also identified as a challenge for women looking to get ahead in the profession and within their organization. This lack of opportunity is seen from both men and women mentors.

According to the CNBC.com article cited above, “In the aftermath of the #metoo movement, 60 percent of male managers in the U.S. said they are now uncomfortable participating in workplace activities with women such as mentoring, one-on-one meetings, or social outings.” But women don’t only struggle to obtain male mentorship, but also female mentorship. T.E. Jayarante, C. Tavis, and G.L. Staines coined the term “Queen Bee Syndrome” in 1973. This phenomenon implies that women in authority are biased against other women in the organization because they see them as a threat. Participant quotes included:

- “Women are not good mentors—they often see other women as threats.”
- “I don’t want to deal with the old boys’ club.”

- “I feel awkward asking a male employee to have lunch with me. I don’t want him to think I’m hitting on him.”
- “In some cases, females in top roles are hurdles for those in lower-level roles.”

Bias, both implicit and otherwise, was also seen as a challenge for women. They experienced this bias not only from elected officials, but also from their peers. Among the participant quotes heard:

- “My boss once said about me, ‘She sure likes to be in charge.’ Sometimes people don’t realize how sexist they are being.”
- “If you apply for something you aren’t qualified for, it’s looked upon as being too aggressive. Sometimes you need to tone it back.”
- “Elected bodies are more comfortable hiring managers who have been managers and not taking a chance on an assistant [city manager].”
- “Women have to walk a different line than men so that they don’t get seen as a ‘witch’ even though in a man the same responses would have been acceptable.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

Statistics show that women are serving in local government in high numbers. There is also evidence that women are serving in leadership positions within local government. The hurdle appears to be in hiring women as the chief appointed official for the organization. A recent count of FCCMA membership showed that only one in five city or county managers in Florida are women. As such, a targeted effort should ensue to get more women appointed to the CAO position.



Figure 2:
Four-Pronged Approach to Increasing the Percentage of Women in Florida CAO Positions to 50% by 2026

1. Local Government Professional Associations

- Identify “champions” to lead women-as-CAO initiatives and include women’s perspectives in all training, webinars, workshops, and sessions.
- Set and publish specific goals for women as CAOs in organizational policies, strategic plans, and print/digital materials.

2. Local Government Elected Bodies

- Encourage League of Cities, Conference of Mayors, Association of Counties, and other elected official associations to include implicit bias and diversity, equity, and inclusion training in conference and program content.
- Hire recruitment firms that value diversity and can articulate exactly how they plan to obtain an applicant pool that reflects the gender and race demographics of the community.

3. City and County Professionals

- Commit to mentoring/sponsoring at least one woman in the profession every year or create or participate in at least one opportunity for women in the profession to learn about being a city or county manager.
- Adopt strategies and hiring policies to recruit more women into leadership positions and drive a culture in which gender and race diversity is valued at all levels of the organization.

4. Executive Recruitment Firms

- Make a commitment to include gender and race diversity in your recruitment efforts, including using criteria that consider replacing titles and tenure with performance measures and skills.
- Sponsor and participate in gender and race diversity sessions at conferences.

A proposed goal is to increase the percentage of women in CAO positions in Florida to 50 percent by the year 2026. We propose achieving the goal through a four-pronged approach that involves the local government profession, local government elected bodies, city and county professionals, and executive search firms (See Figure 2). The actions we offer in pursuit of this goal translate to efforts any state association, local government jurisdiction, or individual local government manager may make in support of moving women to CAO positions. **PM**

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES

¹ <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/05/why-women-are-locked-out-of-top-jobs-despite-having-high-ambition.html>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/15/world/coronavirus-women-leaders.html>

³ <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/women-local-government>

⁴ <https://hbr.org/2016/04/if-theres-only-one-woman-in-your-candidate-pool-theres-statistically-no-chance-shell-be-hired>

⁵ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2014/04/28/act-now-to-shrink-the-confidence-gap/#405e8eba5c41>

⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>

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Leading While Female:

Q&A with Women in Local Government

We spoke with some award-winning local government leaders about gender equity, mentorship, advice for women just starting out, and what inspires them most.

Why do you feel there are fewer women local government managers than men, and what do you think can be done to improve the situation?

Amanda Mack: I believe part of the challenge is that women are far less likely than men to apply for a position they do not feel they are fully qualified for. They may feel that because they do not meet one or two of the requirements of the job posting that it is not appropriate or worth their time to apply. I also believe that I have an obligation to share my story with other women who would be phenomenal assets to public service, and encourage and support them any way that I can. I regularly assist with resume writing and interview prep. I was fortunate to have that kind of assistance when entering the profession, and I am happy to give that back. The key takeaway for me is that women have a huge role to play in local government and we should not shy away from that reality.

Tammi Saddler Jones: I feel there are fewer women local government managers than there are men because historically government at every level has been dominated by men. I had no exposure to local government until I began graduate school, when the school brought in city managers to speak to our classes and guess what—the speakers were all men. I do not recall meeting any female city managers until I was well into my career in local government, which began in the early 2000s. Since then, I have worked in two cities where I was the first woman and the first African American woman to hold the title of city manager/administrator. I have made it my mission to recruit women to help improve the disproportionate number of women to men in local government. We must start early by introducing middle and high school students (especially young girls) to the profession by offering internships to undergraduate women, and by recruiting and retaining women to take on executive-level positions.

Heather Geyer: Having been part of helping to create the Colorado Women Leading Government chapter and advocating for women in the profession over the years, I've spent quite a bit of time reflecting on the nuance of this question. As a white woman of privilege, I feel we need to get comfortable having uncomfortable conversations around the barriers perpetuated in our profession. We have created disparities regarding gender, but also regarding race. Moving forward, I think we need to shift the way we look at the problem; we must begin to take an intersectional analysis when exploring these disparities.

I recommend we use the approach advanced by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), which is to lead with race in these discussions to move the needle further and build an inclusive city management profession. I think we've come a long way, but we are at a crossroads, and we need to shift our thinking and build a collection of local government managers that is more inclusive of gender, race, and gender expression to include LGBTQIA. If we don't reframe our thinking,



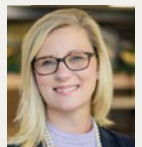
Tonya Galbraith,
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Tammi Saddler Jones,
ICMA-CM
City Manager
South Fulton, Georgia



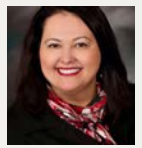
Heather Geyer
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Northglenn, Colorado



Amanda Mack,
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City Manager
Spencer, Iowa



Gloria Hirashima,
ICMA-CM
Chief Administrative
Officer
Marysville, Washington



Marketa Oliver,
ICMA-CM
City Manager
Bondurant, Iowa



Joyce Hunt
Assistant City Manager
Thornton, Colorado



Earlene Teaster
City Manager
Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

I am afraid we will continue to see homogeneity and the existence of harmful “isms”—sexism, ageism, racism, etc. Imagine what our profession could look like if we genuinely welcomed all individuals to join us on this journey.

Gloria Hirashima: There are many reasons. Women are often less confident about their capability, so they do not apply or demonstrate interest in advancement unless encouraged or persuaded by peers and mentors. Women are more likely to have a mental checklist of experience they feel they ought to attain in order to advance, and to believe that there is a specific path to promotion that they must follow. Men just climb and they don't seek permission to do so. Women tend to be more cautious about ambition. Men and women in positions of influence need to encourage women to apply and advance. Readiness is a state of mind.

Marketa Oliver: Even in 2021, women are not afforded the instant credibility that men are—even less experienced or less credentialed men. Every day I see extremely competent women being talked over, discounted, and publicly ridiculed in ways their male counterparts do not experience. To remedy the situation, it is incumbent upon all of us to monitor and rethink how we view and talk about powerful, well-educated, and high-profile women.

Additionally, the division of domestic labor and childcare still often falls primarily to women, making it difficult to be continually available for early morning and evening meetings or networking opportunities. To improve access, I have tried to steer the service clubs I have been involved with to move to lunch meetings. It might also help involvement in evening meetings to have childcare available—not just for managers, but also for residents who want to attend council meetings or planning and zoning, etc. Consider continuing digital access to meetings, which has become more widespread during the pandemic. I think any opportunity for an organization to be flexible in scheduling is critical. That flexibility can improve employee satisfaction and might be the difference in someone being able to continue in the workforce or continue with education.

Joyce Hunt: Thinking back over my 40-plus years in local government, some of the factors that I believe have resulted in fewer women becoming local government managers include the lack of educational programs focused on training people for leadership roles, societal norms that did not encourage women to take on leadership roles outside of the family, the lack of female role models in positions of local government leadership, and the challenge of demonstrating leadership skills as a woman.

I think we need to continue to encourage women to seek positions in local government and then support their efforts through mentorship programs, support groups, professional skill building, and connecting them to respected local government managers. Most importantly, we need to

remember that leadership styles may be different, but that doesn't diminish their effectiveness.

A lot has been made of the importance of women connecting with mentors of both genders as a strategy for career advancement. How have your mentors made an impact on you and your career?

Tonya Galbraith: I have had two mentors in my career that quickly come to mind and both were men. One was my boss when I was young and moved to a very unfamiliar place a thousand miles from home. He was a director in the mayor's office, and I was hired as his administrative assistant. However, he sent me to meetings representing his office, he introduced me to people that could help me network, he allowed me to present proclamations on behalf of the mayor in his stead, he allowed me to start the Mayor's Volunteer Program, and he had me write newsletters regarding all the activities. He helped me grow in more ways than I can count.

Tammi Sadler Jones: I certainly agree that it is important for women to connect with mentors of both genders for career advancement opportunities. One of the individuals who mentored me was Dr. Roger Kemp. He had a great impact on me and my career by allowing me to take the lead on special projects, encouraging me to join and take on a leadership role in professional organizations, and by having the confidence in me to allow me to run the city operations during his absence. Roger introduced me to ICMA programs like Leadership ICMA and the ICMA Credentialing Program, which helped me to get to where I am today.

Gloria Hirashima: I've had many people who have been inspirational to me—both men and women. And it often began with someone telling me that I could do something bigger and more ambitious than the job I was in. The first city planner I worked for suggested I should start readying myself to be a planning director during my first year of work as an associate planner. A city administrator asked me to apply and hired me to be the planning director. Another city administrator suggested I was ready to be a city administrator. I probably wouldn't have applied for any of those positions without their encouragement. It wouldn't have occurred to me. I've also been inspired by many women in nonprofit executive director roles. Their enthusiasm and passion have motivated me to engage in community initiatives and has connected me to men and women in other fields of work. These connections are critical to work enjoyment and fulfillment.

What advice would you give to young women just starting out in local government?

Earlene Teaster: Be a very good listener, especially in the beginning. That is when you garner so much helpful information from your peers. I have found that it is necessary to learn how to handle people, especially your residents, and to

lead by example. Your leadership skills need to improve constantly.

Gloria Hirashima: Aim high! Encourage each other. Don't be stifled by your own caution.

Marketa Oliver: While in college, I worked for a brilliant female business owner who told me her strategy for working her way up in a male-oriented industry. She told me never to take on a task that would not be asked of a male counterpart.

Joyce Hunt: I would advise young women to acquire a strong technical base first, such as finance/accounting/communication, and then build on that with a broader public administration program. I would also encourage young women to find a position that exposes them to the policy process to experience the complexity of this process and the reality of how services and programs are created and changed. Join your state and local city managers association and become actively involved with the outstanding the leaders in your field.

Amanda Mack: Do not be afraid to ask questions. Seek out advice and answers from places that may push your comfort level (a department head with much more experience than you, a member of the community with a differing point of view, for example). Approach your work with a mindset to learn, no matter how much you may already know about a person, issue, or subject. Do not be afraid to try new things, but understand that if they do not work, own it and correct the course. There is no shame in being wrong or making a mistake. No matter the field, or the person, everyone makes mistakes, especially early on in their career. Also, set boundaries. This work has the ability to consume you, and at times, it will, but learn how to pull back and prioritize.

Tammi Sadler Jones: I would encourage young women to take ownership of this chosen profession. Seek out professional development opportunities that can help you grow. Connect with other women in the profession. Volunteer to take the lead on special projects so you that you can showcase your leadership and organizational skills. You can do this. The way has already been paved for you so bloom where you are planted.

Tonya Galbraith: Don't be afraid to move. It is so easy to get comfortable where you are that you might miss your first big opportunity. If there is a position in a faraway state working for a city or town of 1,200 people, take it. You will have the opportunity to learn a little bit about every department and why each one is important—wastewater treatment, utility billing,

I don't recall meeting any female city managers until well into my career. I've worked in two cities where I was the first woman and first African American woman CAO. I've made it my mission to recruit women to improve the disproportionate number of men to women in local government.
—Tammi Sadler Jones

trash collection, and why not filing potholes and plowing snow can make or break you. That position will be the steppingstone to the next position and who knows where that might take you.

Heather Geyer: Focus on the journey, not the destination. If you focus too much on what you don't have or the next big thing, you are going to miss out on the truly important things that make up this experience—the people, the connections, the problems to fix, the opportunity to give back, and the ability to grow and serve. Learn to be present where you are. Work hard, embrace the opportunities that come your way, and have fun!

What fictional female character inspires you?

Tammi Sadler Jones: My 6-year-old son has fallen in love with the movie *Incredibles 2*, which is about a family of superheroes. The mother, known as Elastigirl, does an excellent job balancing being a wife, a mother, and a superhero. She is a fearless leader who shows enormous courage and strength. Elastigirl

represents the type of leader that I strive to be each day. I want to be an effective and efficient local government leader who is intentional about serving and protecting the citizens of my community with the upmost integrity and passion. That is my superpower!

Marketa Oliver: Tess McGill from the movie *Working Girl*. She was born into humble circumstance, recognized education was the key to advancement, worked hard, took chances, and didn't treat other women the unfortunate way she had been treated when she earned her way into a position of authority.

Earlene Teaster: Dolly Parton has always inspired me. She has a theme park here in my city and I am fortunate enough to be able to see her in different situations, not just as an entertainer, but as a very humble person with real feelings for people. Such a leader!

Amanda Mack: Elizabeth McCord, aka *Madam Secretary*. There are so many things that I love about this character—her attitude, her approach to family and work, and how she doesn't back down from a fight, but also doesn't compromise her morals or integrity. She is a strong leader and a dedicated wife and mother. The show highlights that aspect, and doesn't make her choose between a career and her family, which I think is incredibly important for women to see. **RM**

This is just a snippet of our Q&A with these local government leaders. Read the full interviews at icma.org/leading-while-female.

Leading with *Hope*

BY JUNE MIGHTY

An important skill for women leaders **navigating** ambiguity and building resilience

The year 2020 began as a sprint and quickly turned into a marathon. From the COVID-19 pandemic, nationwide social injustice marches, and the most perplexing election I've ever experienced, last year was all about navigating ambiguity, building resilience, and maintaining hope. Even though we are in a new year, the focus remains the same. It is in the midst of all of this turmoil and uncertainty that hope calls us to embrace it as part of our arsenal to successfully rise from a state of despair and lead with confidence.

What People Think Hope Is

When some people hear the word hope, the image of a wet noodle or a mere wish comes to mind. When you hear someone say, "well, I hope it works out for you," you can sometimes pick up on the uncertainty in their voice, which may lead you to question whether they truly believe things will work out.

So, What Is Hope?

Hope is the ability to confidently trust, wait, and expect something good in the future. It is a confident

forward-facing disposition that suggests that you have the will, determination, and strategies needed to reach your goals.¹ So let's look at this more closely. Hope is a confident expectation of good things; good means good, people, not bad. So if you are expecting something bad, it doesn't align or fit with the definition of hope. Hope is also a key factor in developing resilience. No wishing and no noodles—just confidence moving forward.

What Is Resilience?

Before we continue our discussion on hope, we need to talk about resilience. Resilience "denotes a combination of abilities and characteristics that interact dynamically to allow an individual to bounce back, cope successfully, and function above the norm in spite of significant stress or



JUNE MIGHTY is organizational and talent development division chief, Santa Barbara County, California. She is a multi-faceted and practical concrete thinker who is most powerful when pulling apart complex problems to figure out what is going on. She has an unwavering belief in success, and she is skilled at helping people to navigate the difficulties and obstacles that accompany change and transition.



Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.

—Martin Luther

adversity.”² Personally, I think we should look for more than a bounce back—we should expect to bounce forward. Hope is the thing that will get us there.

How to Lead with Hope

To lead with hope, we must cultivate an internal environment of hope. We typically lead and behave in ways that align with our dominant thoughts. This manifests itself in the things we do and say and influences our external environment. Chad (2020) noted that “People who learn to control inner experience will be able to determine the quality of their lives. . . .”³ In essence, we need to lead ourselves first, then attempt to lead others. Stop for a moment and examine your thoughts. What thoughts are coming to your mind? Are they worth keeping?

Get Proximate

Leaders should be aware of what is taking place with their employees. I’m not referring to micromanagement; I’m referring to connection.

Take the time to know what matters to them and what is occurring in their world. I had a chief operating officer who would walk around to see how everyone was doing. It was a quick check-in, but I remember how it made me feel. I adopted the practice and began stepping out of my comfort zone to periodically walk through the building where I worked to say hello to my staff and colleagues.

As public sector leaders, we must also get proximate to what’s occurring in our communities, a point that Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, drives home. ⁴ We have to get proximate to understand the nuances and see the details of what is taking place in our communities.

One disservice that we sometimes do as government leaders is failing to introduce our new hires to their community. We walk them down the hall, we give them policies and procedures, and they get “teamed” and “zoomed,” but we fail

to effectively acclimate them to the community they serve. Whether they are in human resources, park and recreation, or information technology, we need to connect the dots to the community—they must get proximate to know the people they are serving.

Create a Path Forward

There are several things we can do as leaders to create an environment of hope for ourselves and our teams:

- Monitor self-talk and make the mental adjustments necessary to maintain a hopeful mindset.
- Develop clear personal and professional goals.
- Engage your team members in creating a vision for the future and identifying the steps to get there.
- Build positive professional relationships and networks.
- Plan and juggle to achieve a more balanced life.

Be Brave

No matter how much we plan, if we don’t execute, then it is all for nothing. The road ahead will not always be clear, so we must take the next best brave step forward to navigate life and work. I will leave you with this: “It takes courage to stay hopeful in the midst of daunting situations, but it is hope that will save us.”⁵ **RM**

Hope is a vigorous principle; it is furnished with light and heat to advise and execute; it sets the head and heart to work, and animates a man to do his utmost. And thus, by perpetually pushing and assurance, it puts a difficulty out of countenance, and makes a seeming impossibility give way.

—Jeremy Collier

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

¹ Espinoza, M., Molinari, G., Etchemendy, E., Herrero, R., Botella, C., & Rivera, R. M. B. (2017). “Understanding Dispositional Hope in General and Clinical Populations,” *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 12(2), 439–450, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-016-9469-4>

² Tusaie, K., & Dyer, J. (2004), “Resilience: An Historical Review of the Construct,” *Holistic Nursing Practice*, 18(1), 3–10, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-016-9469-4>

³ Ford, C. (2020), “Dangerous Love: Transforming Fear and Conflict at Home, at Work, and in the World,” Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 33.

⁴ Stevenson, B. (2017, August), “Leading Through the Uncomfortable,” Global Leadership Summit.

⁵ Ibid.

WOMEN TO KNOW

★ The next generation is
already leading the way

Around the local government management profession, early- and mid-career women have been making an impact through their hard work, dedication, and commitment to their organization and the residents in their communities. We are recognizing a few extraordinary women that are breaking down barriers and leading the next generation of the local government profession. Here are seven such women, nominated by ICMA Regional Directors.

★ **Kirsten C. Decker**
Manager of Strategy and Evaluation
City and County of Denver Public
Library System

What She Loves About Her Job:

My nana is a librarian and showed me early in life how libraries play an integral role in the fabric of communities. Libraries offer small business support, provide programming for immigrants and refugees, and host makerspaces where creatives can hone their skills. When I had the opportunity to lead an urban library in refining its strategy and telling the story of its impact on the community, I was sold.

Her Biggest Career Accomplishment: Many of my proudest moments in public service come from my work in making the city of Baltimore's budget more accessible for residents. One of my responsibilities was planning the charter-mandated Taxpayer's Night Hearing, where residents had two minutes to give feedback to city officials. I thought the style of the event discouraged engagement; the director of finance seemed amused and gave me the green light to try something new. The Budget Pop-Up was born. Hosted in the hour before the hearing, we encouraged attendees to visit stations highlighting proposed investments within each



outcome area. Booths were staffed by city employees available to answer questions and take direct feedback. We partnered with LiveBaltimore to offer prizes to attendees for visiting every booth and we invited an elementary school to host a bake sale. The event had the largest turnout in history and attendees gave us meaningful, specific feedback about the proposed budget during the hearing. The event has continued to grow, and I even heard that the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra performed at the 2018 Taxpayer's Night!

Where She Sees Herself in 10 Years: If you'd asked me this right after graduating from my MPA program, I would have emphatically replied: a city manager of a midsized community. Years later, my answer isn't as clear; I've discovered I'm an urbanite, I like to get my hands dirty with wicked problems, and I love the fast-paced environment of big-city government. Larger municipalities don't often have a council-manager form of government, but I believe there is still space for the skills and competencies a professional public administrator brings to the table, even if that means a title like chief of staff or deputy mayor.

★ **Tasha Logan Ford**
Assistant City Manager
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

What She Loves About Her Job:

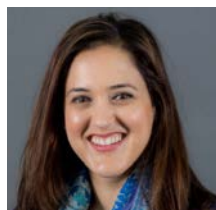
Without any hesitation, the variety. Over time, I have watched this evolve from the services that readily come to mind such as water, sanitation, and public safety to place-making, creating places that foster a sense of belonging, and addressing community social concerns. The environment is dynamic, and you are part of a team providing intricately connected services our residents have come to rely on.

Her Biggest Career Accomplishment: Bringing new resources to the communities I have served. I am proud of leading the new construction and historic renovation of City Hall in Goldsboro, North Carolina, along with helping to create the vision for the downtown streetscape plan, which served as a foundation for the economic boom of the central city. In my tenure in Winston-Salem, our city was the first in North Carolina to receive a \$30M Choice Neighborhoods Implementation grant, which required collaboration among stakeholders to redevelop a public housing community into a thriving mixed-income neighborhood. However, a bigger accomplishment is knowing I have truly lived up to the Athenian Oath. I keep a framed copy in my office that was presented to me at the conclusion of Leadership ICMA in 2009.

Where She Sees Herself in 10 Years: Serving as city manager is on the horizon, as I'm seeing new levels of independence develop in my family life. Although I remain open to a change in my role, in 10 years, regardless of position you'll find me still creating, collaborating, leading, and serving in my community.



★ **Monica Elise Davis**
Community Services Manager
Hayward, California

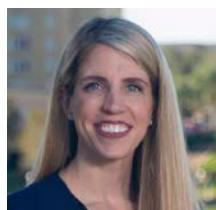


What She Loves About Her Job: Many folks outside of the profession probably view local government as dull and bureaucratic, but my workplace is anything but that. I love that every day is different, that innovation is encouraged, and that the end goal is to be in service to our residents.

Her Biggest Career Accomplishment: I am very proud of helping to bring to the forefront the need for integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into the city's work, and generally helping to facilitate more conversations in the profession.

Where She Sees Herself in 10 Years: I will be working in local government in California, continuing to tackle the big problems that jurisdictions face.

★ **Emily Colon**
Assistant City Manager
Lakeland, Florida



What She Loves About Her Job: I love people—everyone from our front-line employees, department directors, disgruntled residents, business owners, developers, and anyone and everyone in between. We're in the people business, and the better you understand your people the better you can serve them effectively. I always say it's the best part of my job and the hardest, but people are our purpose in local government.

Her Biggest Career Accomplishment: Leading our organization through COVID-19. I had just hired our emergency manager a month before the pandemic hit the United States, and the city manager at the time assigned me as the lead for it, of course not knowing at the time the magnitude (or duration) of the responsibility. I'm proud of how we have been consistent and balanced in our approach (and in alignment with our department of health and CDC) to protect our people and maintain our levels of service to the community.

Where She Sees Herself in 10 Years: I see myself leading an organization and a community in a bigger way.

★ **Kimberly Richardson**
Deputy City Manager
Evanston, Illinois



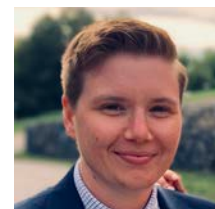
What She Loves About Her Job: Being in a seat of influence. It allows me to bring to the table diverse voices that are rarely heard from to provide their input before policies are created.

Her Biggest Career Accomplishment: A few years ago I read an article about how in 1994, Congress designated the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday as a national day of service. The community I work for at the time did not have any official MLK Day commemoration celebrations. So working through one of our volunteer boards, we developed a communitywide day of service, which took months to

plan. The first year was very chaotic, but successful. Many years later, the event is well organized and stronger than ever and has become a community tradition.

Where She Sees Herself in 10 Years: I see myself traveling, that is something I have not ever really done outside of work. As for my career, I hope I have the privilege to continue to serve in a community that fits my values and purpose in a role in which I continue to have a seat of influence.

★ **Becca Meekins**
Assistant Town Administrator
Northborough, Massachusetts



What She Loves About Her Job: Every day is different. The best part of this job is getting to learn a little bit about a lot of different things. No two days are the same and new challenges push me to constantly learn, adapt, and absorb new information.

Her Biggest Career Accomplishment: I like to think that I haven't yet experienced my biggest career accomplishment, but receiving the 2019 Potential Made Possible Scholarship from the League of Women in Government to attend my first ICMA conference was certainly a highlight, as is this honor to be recognized by my colleagues as a "woman to know in local government."

Where She Sees Herself in 10 Years: Leading by example and inspiring others to be confident and lead as their authentic selves.

★ **Melissa Appleby**
Deputy Town Manager
Simsbury, Connecticut



What She Loves About Her Job: I love being able to have a direct impact on the residents we serve on a daily basis. I believe that local government is the level of government that people connect with most, and where we, as managers, can really make a difference.

Her Biggest Career Accomplishment: I am very proud of how quickly my organization was able to adapt to the challenges presented by COVID-19, and the ways in which we continue to be flexible and creative. From setting people up to work remotely, to making all public meetings virtual, to the implementation of curbside services, we have been able to continue providing a high level of service under these unpredictable circumstances.

Where She Sees Herself in 10 Years: This past year has taught me that we truly do not know what the future may hold, and that there may be forces beyond our control that led us to readjust. In 10 years, I hope to be continuing my work in public service and having a positive impact on my community.

This is just a snippet of "Women to Know." Read the full interviews at icma.org/women-to-know. PM



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.

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Details at icma.org/awards.

The ICMA logo is displayed in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters within a dark blue rectangular box. The background of the entire image features a bokeh effect of blue and white light spots in the upper half, transitioning to a dense field of orange and yellow light spots in the lower half.

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