## Economic Development Strategies for the 21st Century

Small Businesses Play a Large Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Serving Everyone’s Best Interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Biggest Work-Related Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>On the Docket in 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Passion in the New Year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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features

6 WHY SMALL BUSINESS MATTERS
Small business retention is paramount to today’s local government economy.

Douglas Martin, McHenry, Illinois

10 THE WORK OF LEADERSHIP
How to get people to choose to follow.

Matthew Fairholm, Vermillion, South Dakota

14 SHIFITNG TO A NEXT GENERATION WORKPLACE
Aurora, Colorado, has a model for attracting and retaining young talent for its workforce.

Michael Lawson, Aurora, Colorado

20 ON THE DOCKET IN 2017
Keep a look out for these legal issues that may impact your community this year.

Lisa Soronen, Washington, D.C.

departments

2 Ethics Matter!
Serving Everyone’s Best Interests All the Time

4 On Point
What Will Be Your Biggest Work-Related Challenges During 2017?

5 @icma.org

24 Management Minute
Building Collaborative Leadership

26 Commentary
Praise for Harvard’s Executive Education Program

29 Professional Services Directory

32 Balancing Act
Passion in the New Year

icma.org/pm
This issue of PM is available online and mobile at icma.org/pm December 27, 2016.
CMA’s review of the Code of Ethics continues with Tenet 4. If you have to glance at the Code hanging on your wall to refresh your recollection of what it says, you are not alone.

The tenet falls into the category of important but maybe not memorable: “Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all of the people.”

Perhaps Tenet 4 isn’t remarkable because it is a given that professionals show up for work every day with this goal in mind and that their work to this end is intentional. Trying not to stray from that goal is rarely the reason for a member to reach out to ICMA for advice, and it’s just as rare that a complainant cites it as the principle violated when a member is alleged to have done something unethical.

The same cannot be said about Tenet 4’s solitary guideline! It is that widely known yet difficult, notorious, often ambiguous guideline on length of service. While just a guideline, it’s often referenced in the profession as the “rule” that once you take a position you must stay two years. Something akin to indentured servitude.

It generates many questions from members at every career stage trying to figure out “should I stay or should I go?”. Ten percent of ethics cases reviewed by the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct involve short tenures.

As the dialogue about the relevancy of these principles moves forward, many will focus on the guideline. That’s understandable given the immediate impact the guideline has on a person trying to decide her or his next professional move.

If for no other reason, the turmoil of the last election cycle should make us focus on the actual tenet. Given the apparent divide in this country on a huge range of consequential issues, the purpose and intent of the tenet needs thoughtful consideration.

Is the profession committed to the principle that the purpose of local government, at all times, is to serve the best interests of all of the people? If so, how do you do that? And perhaps more significantly, how are you sure that you are doing so?
A Look Back

The language of Tenet 4 was first added to the Code of Ethics in 1952, when it resided in the No. 7 spot:

“The city manager keeps the community informed on municipal affairs. He emphasizes friendly and courteous service to the public. He recognizes that the chief function of the local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all the people on a non-partisan basis.”

In 1972, the language was simplified and moved to its current position at No. 4 in the Code:

“Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all of the people.”

The importance of keeping the community informed was not deleted. Emphasis on a duty to communicate with the public along with providing effective and courteous service are reflected in Tenet 9. The Tenet 4 guideline was added in 1972 and has remained untouched since.

Length of Service Guideline

A minimum of two years generally is considered necessary to render a professional service to the local government. A short tenure should be the exception rather than a recurring experience. Under special circumstances, however, it may be in the best interests of the local government and the member to separate in a shorter time.

Examples of such circumstances would include refusal of the appointing authority to honor commitments concerning conditions of employment, a vote of no confidence in the member, or severe personal problems. It is the applicant’s responsibility to ascertain conditions of employment; inadequately determining terms of employment prior to arrival does not justify premature termination.

The guideline applies to all ICMA members working for a local government. At the time it was drafted, the actual audience was the city, town, or county manager. A two-year commitment would have taken the manager through at least one entire budget cycle, which was probably considered the very least a person should contribute.

ICMA’s membership today is far broader and more inclusive. Now we field questions from members at every career stage who struggle to determine whether their specific situation creates an exception to the guideline. Which begs the question of whether a 45-year-old standard created for a narrower target audience is relevant today.

Things to Consider

• Does the tenet truly describe the purpose of local government? Is it still relevant to the profession?
• Should the tenet provide more guidance on how professionals make local government serve the interests of all? Tenet 10, for example, which focuses on resisting encroachment on your professional responsibilities, states that problems should be handled “without discrimination on the basis of principle and justice.” Should that be moved to Tenet 4 to provide more direction?
• If length of service matters, should it be aligned with the duties and responsibilities of the position? And if so, what is a professional length of service?
• What are we missing?

You will have an opportunity to weigh in this year on the critical question of the day: What is our purpose? Please don’t be shy! Send me an e-mail message.
WHAT WILL BE YOUR BIGGEST WORK-RELATED CHALLENGES DURING 2017?

CRANDALL JONES, ICMA-CM
Municipal Administrator
Norristown, Pennsylvania
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Other than producing a sustainable budget, I have two big challenges ahead during 2017.

The first will be successfully undertaking labor negotiations with our borough’s police union in a tough economic environment, where there are mutual concerns related to personnel, equipment, and facilities.

The second—an exciting challenge—is to successfully implement “Year One” of Norristown’s first-ever major capital improvement plan.

Infrastructure, facilities, and equipment have gone unattended—some of it for decades—so aligning operational needs, council desires, and community expectations with a sustainable capital budget will be an interesting undertaking.

JENNIFER PHILLIPS
City Manager
Saint Helena, California
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Looking ahead to 2017, I plan to continue focusing on building trust with the community. St. Helena had not made proper public administration a priority for 20 years.

During my first two years as city manager in St. Helena, I guided the city council and community through numerous financial, human resources, grant, operational, and project management issues that have shocked and upset many residents and business owners.

Through open and honest communication, I have tried to authentically include the community in understanding the problems, identifying solutions, and acknowledging improvements.

Trust in government is something we earn. Through effective community engagement, creativity, innovation, and proper public administration, my goal is to show the residents they can begin to trust their local government.

GARY MEAGHER, ICMA-CM
County Administrator
Reno County, Kansas
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I see several work-related challenges during 2017, but I believe the two biggest are the changes that came after the 2016 Kansas state and local elections in November and a new statewide tax lid on local governments.

The 2016 elections resulted in a change in a majority of county commission members, which will have an influence on our organization. This and the new tax lid will impact the preparation of the next county budget and the services that we offer.

My goal is to ease the effect of these changes on the organization and work with the commissioners, elected officials, and staff to move forward.

JILL GOLDSMITH, ICMA-CM
Town Manager
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Chatham, a coastal community rich in commercial fishing tradition, has a vibrant tourist economy. Year-round population is 6,200; 25,000+ seasonally. Our challenges for 2017 relate to the town’s aging community and workforce demographics.

It is the second (demographically) oldest municipality in the state, somewhat isolated, and also has one of the highest property valuations. Having just completed a community needs assessment, my focus will be on identifying service needs of the aging-in-place residents and continuing to engage and retain the non-retiree population.

The town’s workforce is similar to its demographics, so a focus will be on succession planning and retention. Funding of other post-employment benefits beyond annual valuation is also a priority.

We raised these issues at our annual budget summit in October 2016 and used the (ICMA) IndiKit to present trends to identify emerging issues and long-range considerations for the budget review process.
OPEN DATA 101

See great tips and examples from the Sunlight Foundation to help local governments develop open data policies and get started making performance data available to the public.

icma.org/open-data

WANTED: SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

ICMA is accepting 2017 scholarship applications for the Harvard Kennedy School Executive Education Program until January 31, 2017. Application details are posted at ICMA’s website.

icma.org/2017scholarship_application

SOLSMART GOLD

In 2016, 22 communities received a SolSmart designation, which signals that a community is ready to attract and invest in the solar industry.

icma.org/solsmart_designation

PARADING AROUND

Planning a parade during 2017 in your community? Keep things in line with information on parade safety.

icma.org/paradesafety
Why SMALL BUSINESS Matters

What local government can do to support this vital economic engine

By Douglas Martin, ICMA-CM

One may ask: Why should local government managers be concerned about small business? In short: As the nation’s economic engine, small businesses matter.

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), small businesses with less than 500 employees constitute 99.9 percent of all businesses in the United States and 97.7 percent of all U.S. exporting companies. They also account for 48 percent of all employees within the private sector.

Maintaining the health of small businesses, however, is a complicated issue, one that encompasses demographic shifts, youth entrepreneurial education, financing options, economic development incentives, philanthropy, and much more.

One solution may be for local government managers to help nurture the entrepreneurial spirit of young people. This can be done through outreach programs, workshops, and seminars that teach students about the importance of entrepreneurship and how to create a successful small business.

Matters

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more. Perhaps it is a harbinger that Columbus, Ohio, has created a position just to focus on small business outreach.

**A Status Report**

**The demographics.** Millennials represent the largest demographic cohort of the current population in the United States according to the 2014 report “15 Economic Facts about Millennials” issued by the Council of Economic Advisers. Entrepreneurship, though, is not as high among millennials as Generation X and baby boomers. SBA notes that trends suggest entrepreneurship among millennials will remain relatively low for decades.

A critical element of the successful growth and retention of small business is ensuring that existing companies have succession plans deep in talent and resources, according to Anthony Chirchirillo, chief executive officer of Chirch Global Manufacturing, Cary, Illinois. A pipeline of talent is necessary to help sustain existing business due to retiring boomers and the larger millennial population.

**Educational realities.** In 2011, the organizations of Gallup and Operation HOPE created an annual index to measure student interest and aspirations in entrepreneurialism to meet future demands of competing in a global economic environment.

According to the 2015 Gallup-HOPE Index, approximately five in 1,000 people have “...exceptionally rare genius-level entrepreneurship talent.” This translates to more than 90,000 students who can be a future resource and catalyst for the American economy. The index concluded that students in grades 5 to 12 aspire to be future entrepreneurs, but that there was limited education to nurture and promote entrepreneurialism.

The annual index results are a call to action. Both the public and private sectors, including local government, share responsibility in accepting this challenge to sustain and grow the economy for generations to come.

**Innovative models.** Margarita Geleske is executive director of the nonprofit organization INCubatoredu, a community grassroots effort created specifically by entrepreneurs and small business people and is financially supported by entrepreneurs. She explained that Barrington’s community members collaborated with Barrington School District’s 220 Educational Foundation and its educators “…to create a transformative year-long course for sophomores and juniors that will immerse student teams in entrepreneurship through an authentic business incubator start-up experience.”

Michael Miles, cofounder of INCubatoredu and a Chicago-area entrepreneur, sought a way to integrate practical, hands-on entrepreneurship training with high school education. He collaborated with teachers and entrepreneurs, and they formulated the cutting-edge curriculum that focuses on startup practices and university examples and also uses local entrepreneurs to assist in mentoring.

The curriculum was launched in Barrington High School in 2013 and is a model that can be replicated and implemented anywhere, which is critical to its success.

Schools have adopted this incubator and accelerator model, which culminates in a real-world experience where teams pitch business plans and ideas to a diverse group of business experts. First STEP, a team from Dundee-Crown High School located in Carpentersville, Illinois, won the 2016 INCubatoredu National Pitch Competition. It was awarded seed money to pursue the team’s idea of using restaurant food waste and turning it into an organic fertilizer.

The nonprofit organization scaled significantly. Since launching out of Barrington three years ago, INCubatoredu’s curriculum was being taught to more than 2,000 students in 75 schools across eight states in fall 2016. It also has created entrepreneurial programs for elementary schools and is piloting an entrepreneurial program for middle schools.

Two locally based foundations financially contributed to make this program a reality in McHenry County, Illinois. The Foglia Family Foundation and the Domek Foundation, established by owners of successful local companies, exemplify the importance of philanthropy in local communities seeking to foster future economic growth by investing in younger generations.

**Improving Survival Rates**

The difficult reality is that 50 percent of small businesses fail within five years according to SBA. One of the major factors in failure is financing and access to capital. Small businesses seek financing primarily to fund start-up costs, purchase inventory, and expand and increase their financial foundation.

SBA also states that approximately 73 percent of small businesses used financing in the past year. Fifty-seven percent of small businesses used financiers in the past year. Fifty-seven percent of small businesses used financiers in the past year.

**TAKEAWAYS**

› Communities across the nation continue to adapt, invent, and reinvent strategies to address economic development goals in a dynamic economy.

› Education, innovation/entrepreneurialism, governmental collaboration, business advocacy, and leveraging public and private investment are being used to retain and create new businesses.
savings to expand their businesses. Small businesses are critical to new job creation, accounting for 63.3 percent of net new jobs (1992 to 2013).

SBA records show that survival rates are improving. Of the businesses that opened in 2014, 79.9 percent were still around in 2015, which is the highest percentage since 2005. This improved from 45.4 percent for businesses opening in 2006 (low) to 51.4 percent (high) survival rate for businesses opened in 2011.

Marketplace lending or crowdfunding is becoming increasingly popular to finance small business. In 2014, an estimated $8.6 billion in loans were financed through online lending platforms, an amount larger than all previous years combined. Therefore, it is incumbent upon local governments to foster business retention opportunities and assist businesses seeking financing to grow their business.

Role of Intergovernmental Collaboration
Consider the situation of Fabrik Molded Plastics, a family-owned international manufacturer of custom-molded plastic parts, which in 2015 evaluated options to undertake a $5 million expansion of its growing operation in McHenry County, Illinois. Fabrik, which employs 400 people and has been a locally based business for 35 years, contemplated relocating its existing operation, as well as expanding it, to Alabama, Indiana, or Kentucky.

Nine public-taxing entities to which Fabrik pays property taxes approved a property tax abatement using an under-utilized property tax abatement and incentive program adopted by the city of McHenry. Collectively, these governmental entities and the McHenry County Economic Development Corporation worked to advocate for a tax abatement.

That is, if Fabrik purchased a 44,000-square-foot vacant building located to the west of its current building to expand, as opposed to closing its existing 113,000 square-foot operation and moving out of state, Fabrik would maintain its corporate headquarters at its current location. It would retain and grow its employment base in the city and county of McHenry, as well as assist in expanding the local and regional economies.

Through regional and state collaboration, more than 400 jobs were retained, 50 to 100 jobs will be created over the next three to five years, and a 44,000-square-foot building is now functioning as the expansion space Fabrik purchased to locally grow its business.

Indeed, fostering small business growth is a key component to communities’ long-term success. Columbus (9,000 employees) established a small business concierge position in 2013 in order to be more proactive in supporting small businesses. It has a diversified economy with many technology-oriented companies. The concierge assists businesses with permitting, exploring financing options, and navigating public policy.

Ryan Schick holds the position of Columbus’ concierge and serves as a direct liaison between businesses and city departments. He says that on a day-to-day basis, he spends 80 percent of his time outside of the office.

“I really try to bring all city resources to them. It is extremely important, but not the only answer to economic development (entrepreneurialism),” he says. “What’s important is that a city focuses on all businesses and not take them for granted.”

He also notes that the city was awarded a $40 million Smart City grant in June 2016 to create a test market system for technology-related infrastructure. An additional $100 million was leveraged from private and other public partners, including Ohio State University and the state of Ohio.

Columbus will receive up to $40 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation and up to $10 million from Vulcan, Inc., to supplement the $90 million that the city has already raised from other private partners.

Using these resources, the city will work to reshape its transportation system to become part of a fully-integrated city that harnesses the power and potential of data, technology, and creativity to reimagine how people and goods move throughout its borders.

Job creation and intergovernmental cooperation are also vital for the long-term economic viability in rural areas. The goal of Stronger Economies Together (SET), launched in 2009 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Department in partnership with four regional development centers and university partners, is to complete a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Plan across multiple rural areas (cities and counties).

The goal includes identifying the economic assets of these rural communities and bringing all the partners to the same table to strengthen the regional economy.

Since its inception, SET has expanded to 30 states across 90 regions. Bo Beaulieu, director of the Purdue Center for Regional Development and assistant director of the Extension Community Development Program, explained that the program provides an opportunity to “compete more effectively on a global level with regional cooperation.”

To date, USDA reports that $115 million in grants, loans, and regional participation has been leveraged over a six-year period through intergovernmental cooperation.

Measuring Effectiveness
Measuring economic development strategies and programs is a critical necessity for local governments. Use of public funds for incentives and retaining a high-level of fiscal transparency and accountability are essential. In 2010, PM magazine published the article “Economic Gardening—Is It Right for Your Community?” It centered on Littleton, Colorado, and its efforts in shifting from business recruiting to business creation and growth.

According to Littleton Economic Development Director Denise Stephens, since 2010, Littleton has placed more em-
phasic on business attraction, specifically to diversify the city’s economic base; however, 60 percent of staff time remains on retaining existing businesses.

Littleton maintains a database of 2,700 businesses and tracks all aspects of business outreach using the database. Through August 2016, staff members have engaged 313 companies as part of city business retention efforts and 200 companies have been contacted as part of the business attraction effort. These engagement efforts include assisting companies with locating an appropriate site and discussing potential economic incentives that may be available.

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) approved a best practice on “Monitoring Economic Development Performance.” in September 2015. GFOA recommends that all governmental entities that use incentives include performance measures to evaluate their effectiveness and to ensure the governments’ economic development objectives are being accomplished.

GFOA also recommends that communities implement a monitoring process to establish metrics to accurately monitor and report the fiscal impacts of the incentives.

**Fostering Strategic Success**

Successful economic development strategies should be adaptable, promote intergovernmental cooperation, encourage the leveraging of private and public investment, promote business retention and expansion, and foster innovation and entrepreneurialism.

Philanthropy can also play an integral role in economic development programs. Education through the establishment of incubator and accelerator programs can foster the support and the engagement of our youth.

Local government leaders, however, must remain informed and work with local, state, and national legislators to educate themselves about the complexities associated with business retention and growth, along with business creation.

Policies and regulatory reforms can hinder and place an undue burden on existing and future businesses and impede a community’s economic development strategy.

Relationships, collaboration, and social capital are critical in achieving success in economic development. Residents, businesses, stakeholder groups, and governmental entities need to play an integral role and remain engaged in continuing to formulate economic development strategies for the 21st century.
A n oft-quoted, though probably apocryphal, story of a French politician tells of him looking out his window to see a crowd of people rushing past as if in a parade headed to some grand event. Recognizing what was happening, he excuses himself and finds his way outside saying, “There goes my people. I must follow them, for I am their leader.”

Maybe this story is about political leaders following a constituency’s will or a sincere reminder to listen to one’s followers. Perhaps it is simply a cynical summary, suggesting too many people claim leadership when none is really at play.

Interestingly, versions of this quote are attributed to Gandhi and to British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, who is quoted as saying, “I must follow the people. Am I not their leader?”

Despite the possible interpretations, it does remind us there is something of common sense about the idea that a leader should have followers. President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, “It is a terrible thing to look over your shoulder when you are trying to lead—and find no one there.”

Many of us may have known individuals who thought they were leaders, but no one seemed to follow them. Some who think they are leaders misunderstand that having a title or rank—having
a position in the organizational hierarchy—does not necessarily mean they are demonstrating leadership.

People will do what those in organizational authority ask them to do, but such compliance is not the stuff of real leadership per se. Another of Gandhi’s quotes suggests this difference: “I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles [or organizational authority]; but today it means getting along with people.”

While it may be the hallmark of management to get others to conform to the manager’s wishes—to do things the manager wants done the way the manager wants them to do it—leadership is about getting other people to follow willingly and voluntarily. It is about helping people choose to follow you and your cause.

A Voluntary Decision
Followers, as compared to subordinates for instance, voluntarily decide to listen, to be influenced by, and to be uplifted because of leaders. So the real questions of leadership include: What is it that makes people choose to follow, to emulate, to support, to serve? And why will people follow some but not others?

Of the many theories of leadership, those that suggest a values foundation to leadership offer a convincing response. The answers lie somewhere in the idea that values are a person’s de facto decision criteria.

A person’s voluntary decision to accept a would-be leader’s influence begins by agreeing with or wanting to be identified by the leader’s values and purposes. Such leadership depends upon the free choice of both leader and follower in developing a relationship of mutual respect, collaborative work, and edification, or what historian and political scientist James MacGregor Burns wisely called “transforming leadership.” This type of leadership is based on voluntary decisions by leader and follower to choose to influence and be influenced.

The Four Vs of Leadership
One way to think of the work of leadership, then, is to figure out how to get people to choose to follow. A simple framework may help. It begins with the idea of values and ends with the principle of choice.

In between are the leader activities of explaining what the values do for us and showing what we have to do to make these important things happen. This framework can be called the Four Vs of leadership: values, vision, vectors, and voice (see Figure 1).

Values. People’s values serve them in interesting ways. They offer standards of behavior. They offer guidelines for self-analysis. They provide measurements of right and wrong.

Values are the decision criteria of what we should and should not do, of what we think is truly good and beautiful to pursue. Because values help us make choices, leadership has a lot to do with people’s values and how those values are defined, adopted, and applied so as to choose to follow.

Leaders inspire, perhaps, because they are themselves inspired by certain values they believe are appropriate, useful, or right. Then others feel or eventually come to feel the same and choose to follow.

Without a clear commitment to and statement of values, followers cannot easily or consistently choose to follow. It is not easy to follow someone who changes what he or she values all the time.

Few things are more frustrating to potential followers than to have a leader who goes all over the place. How does one know what is important or how one’s work fits into the overall purpose if the decision criteria change?

What is left is a decision not to follow because it is too difficult to see where the “leader” is going. What emerges is compliant employees doing what they are told, not rocking the boat by asking too many clarifying questions (the answers to which are not forthcoming anyway).

Real leadership asks leader and follower to deal with each other on a values basis, so a choice to follow is available. Though this may not be easy, it is essential.

Vision. Vision operationalizes, or puts into practice, values. Vision is a manifestation of values; it makes values real. It informs people about who

![FIGURE 1: The Four Vs of Leadership.](image-url)

- **Values**: - Everyone has values. - Values help us choose. - Values trigger behavior.
- **Vision**: - Vision operationalizes values. - Vision paints a picture of values in action. - Personal example can be seen as a depiction of vision.
- **Vectors**: - Vectors operationalize vision. - Vectors outline critical success factors. - A summary of the vectors is a mission.
- **Voice**: - Voice says we all have freedom to choose. - Voice says leaders and followers are volunteers. - Voice injects moral agency into leadership.

Adapted from Putting Your Values to Work: Becoming the Leader Others Want to Follow, Matthew R. Fairholm, 2013 (Praeger).
they really are or what an organization really stands for.

Vision reminds us that leadership is about helping others see values in action. One writer described vision as a shared image of a desirable future and a reflection of our fundamental values, beliefs, and assumptions about the world springing out of our past knowledge, experience, and intuition, and about the direction the organization should take to reach the desirable.

Real leadership asks leader and follower to deal with each other on a values basis, so a choice to follow is available. Though this may not be easy, it is essential.

Visions make our ideals more real as we can see the result of our beliefs and actions. They are often expressed in stories or in the example of a leader at work.

The leadership element of vision asks us to be able to see not only with our head, but also with our heart. It makes sense, but it also feels right; and it is from that combination that a leader makes the choice to lead and a follower makes the choice to follow.

Vectors. As leaders outline work vectors, they help followers see the path to fulfilling the vision. One meaning for vector is the direction and magnitude of something.

More precisely for our purposes, vectors deal with the what, the where to, the how, and the how much of what we are to do in order to fulfill the vision. It is the work of leadership to outline the vectors to be done, the steps to be taken, or the path to follow, as well as make sure our vision is realized and our values fulfilled.

The word comes from Latin’s original meaning “to carry or to convey.” In this sense, vectors carry the vision forward in terms of outlining actual things to do at work to make the vision a reality.

These vectors might be more commonly called objectives, key result areas, critical success factors, long-term goals, strategic goals, or mission elements. Whatever they are called, they link directly to the vision because it is the way we are to fulfill it, and therefore, relate directly to the values that make us who we are. If we like the linkages and the work to be done, we choose to follow.

It is that linkage that is partially the beauty and the purpose of leadership. People like to know where they stand and how their work fits together with the overall organization. Vectors play a key role in making sure these connections happen.

Voice. Voice in the leadership relationship is the most vital. To be basic, voice is about choice. It has to do with volition, freedom, or individual agency to act for oneself.

Voice reminds us that where there is no choice in the relationship among people, there can be no leadership. At best, perhaps there is management; at worst, there is oppression or tyranny or manipulation or authoritarianism acting upon people.

Usually, as you formally join a group, you are told that so-and-so is your supervisor or team leader, and during orientation you most likely have a chance to meet this person. We do not often get to choose our managers.

We do, however, always, always choose who we follow. We always choose our leaders. Ultimately, that choice is based on the values, the vision, and the vectors that the leader has outlined and with which we agree or to which we have a desire to become united.

Voice reminds us that understanding leadership has more to do with understanding the followers than it does understanding someone who holds a position of authority. This is because whether someone is ultimately a leader depends entirely on whether another person chooses to follow him or her.

Making the Four Vs Real

Leaders recognize that followers are, of their own volition, choosing to engage with the values, vision, and vectors they outline. Values trigger behavior and reflect meaning, purpose, and commitment of both leader and follower.

Vision operationalizes the values set, making sense for others what the values really mean or what they can do for us now and in the future. Vectors operationalize the magnitude and direction of vision-driven activity and work and mirror the concepts of organization mission and objectives.

Voice stresses that leadership is an activity of individual agency and free will. It is shorthand for that which makes the leadership relationship work—the nature of the interaction or lack thereof between leader and follower.

The four Vs emphasize that the leadership relationship is essentially a voluntary one based on the level of alignment with the values, vision, and vectors at play. How well we get others to choose to follow us depends upon our capacity to make the Four Vs real.

Otherwise, we will be chasing after people, pretending to be their leader and experiencing all the frustrations, ineffectiveness, and deterioration that come with self-deception.
Have you or a colleague made a significant difference in your community or to the profession? Have you implemented an innovative program that addressed a critical community need, improved quality of life for residents, or saved your local government valuable resources?

If so, plan to nominate a colleague or program to the 2017 ICMA Awards.

U.S. and International nominations accepted.

Program nominations open January 3, 2017 and close on March 15, 2017

Visit icma.org/awards

or check the January 10th edition of the ICMA Newsletter for more information.
SHIFTing TO A NEXT GENERATION WORKPLACE

Aurora, Colorado, creates model for attracting and retaining young talent
By Michael Lawson

Let’s all agree on something: Managers have all the facts about millennials. Millennials have all the facts about millennials. Chances are your organization has had its fill of jokes about millennials’ dire need for constant feedback and affinity for sharing...well, everything.

Local governments have accepted what the next generation workforce looks like. They are now confronted with doing everything they can to create one.

Local governments face no shortage of challenges when attracting young, qualified job candidates. There is the management challenge that comes with accommodating the unique demands of younger generations seemingly at the expense of older ones. There is also the financial challenge of competing with better paying, more prestigious private sector companies for the best-qualified candidates. The fear of placing additional strain on busy human resources teams also weighs on the minds of managers.

It is not much of a surprise, then, that attracting the next generation of workers was recently identified as the top management challenge by ICMA members. As reported in the July 15, 2016, edition of ICMA SmartBrief, 28.6 percent of survey respondents believed attracting young employees to their organizations was more pressing than building citizen trust, communicating with elected officials, or engaging department heads.¹

Many local governments have started down the road of changing policies and processes while others are scrambling on where to start. Local governments have taken a wide range of approaches in tailoring policies to win the attention of young job candidates, ranging from making job applications more mobile device-friendly to marketing their government as a great place to work.²

In August 2015, Aurora, Colorado, launched its own wide-ranging approach for creating a next generation workplace. The intent of this article is to share the city’s model as one potential road map for local governments looking to attract and retain young, quality talent.
**Policy Reviews Are Not Enough**

Aurora focused on attracting next generation workers after the city manager, George “Skip” Noe, read “Next Generation Professionals: An Inside Look at What Matters to Them” in the August 2015 issue of *Public Management*. He then sent a brief e-mail to three senior staff members. The task was to read the article and pull together a dozen or so young employees to begin reviewing and updating the city’s personnel policies.

After a thorough review of the article, the three project sponsors concluded that changing policy documents alone would not be enough. A broader and deeper approach to reimagining policies, processes, and even culture was needed.

Sponsors asked department directors to nominate high-performing young employees to join the project team. Two dozen young employees were promised the unique opportunity to help shape the organization, while gaining valuable project management experience.

The new group’s initial task was to change the way the city does business to better attract and retain high-quality young employees. The group called itself “Shift,” as it wanted to encourage an organizationwide shift in its thinking, policies, and culture.

**One Goal, Six Strategic Areas: A Model**

Shift program sponsors broke the *PM* article’s recommendations into five strategic areas the city would use as the foundation for small working groups: recruiting and hiring, benefits, marketing and communications, culture and philosophy, and employee development.

A sixth area, physical environment, was added to complement the others. A previous forward-thinking employee group had initiated an effort to create fun, offbeat spaces crammed with high-tech collaboration tools. That effort was well under way and had already gained traction. More on the focus of each strategy area can be found in Figure 2.

Policy updates catering to younger employees had to be supported not only by changing the way the organization interacted with employees, but also in the way employees interacted with each other. Aurora believed changing its culture was imperative to make policy changes sustainable.

**Building the Teams**

Employees nominated by directors were encouraged to invite others who might be interested in the project. The group quickly doubled in size from two dozen to almost 50. Nearly every department was represented.

Participants expressed excitement at the chance to have their ideas heard and to impact city policy. Broad interdepartmental representation and continual support from the manager demonstrated to directors that making their star employees available to work on the project was crucial for the city’s future. The Shift project provided a way for directors to further develop their next generation leaders as well.

Shift members were given their choice of which team to join. They were told they were responsible for not just generating ideas for workplace change, but also for implementing them.

Project sponsors directed the teams to take a very broad approach on how to achieve their goal—all ideas would be considered. Subject matter experts were

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**FIGURE 1. City of Aurora, Colorado, Full-time Employee Generational Demographics (as of August 2016).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Employees (Count)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomer (1946–1964)</td>
<td>929 (33.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X (1965–1979)</td>
<td>1,090 (39.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millenial (1980–1997)</td>
<td>717 (26.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18 (0.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total FTE (filled positions)</td>
<td>2,754</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 2. SHIFT Next Generation Workplace Strategic Areas.**

- **Recruiting and hiring.** Leverage social media, web-based tools to attract young talent; focus on mobile recruiting; speed up hiring and enhance interviewing practices.

- **Benefits.** Add flexibility to benefits package with focus on facilitating a better work/life integration for younger employees.

- **Marketing and communications.** Craft messaging on the positive and unique traits of the Aurora organization and its community to appeal to the career and personal interests of prospective employees.

- **Culture and philosophy.** Foster better supervisor/employee relationships, better integrate employee ideas and feedback into corporate decision-making process, and discover and leverage employee innovation.

- **Employee development.** Propose leadership development opportunities geared toward young, aspiring leaders; help employees secure career growth opportunities outside of their regular duties.

- **Physical environment.** Support the next generation workforce with physical spaces that facilitate social connections and creative collisions; make space where all ideas are shared without fear.

More details at https://prezi.com/rhcr3wzas7fk/aurora-shift/#.
assigned to each team as facilitators to provide technical knowledge to team members. But facilitators were encouraged to let teams generate and champion their own ideas.

One unexpected development was the desire of employees from the boomer and X generations to be a part of the Shift team. Project sponsors were frequently reminded by those employees that they, too, preferred many of the same things their millennial colleagues preferred!

Laying the Foundation Process. Project sponsors spent two months developing the initial team-based framework. The strategic teams were then given their tasks and four months to come up with their initial recommendations.

Steering committee. One or two employees assumed leadership roles within their respective teams. Team leaders and a project sponsor met together on a regular basis to serve as a steering committee for the entire project.

Performance metrics. The recruiting and hiring team provided baseline employment and cost-of-turnover metrics for the Shift group. This step was critical for tracking the success of the Shift program over time.

Employee survey. The steering committee surveyed all employees using an online questionnaire. Teams used the results as a starting point for their research (select survey results are shown in Figure 3).

“Making the Pitch” and Implementation. After five months of work, all six teams met together in an off-site symposium format and presented their ideas to one
another. The intent of the symposium was to have the teams refine each other’s recommendations in advance of making a pitch to city leadership two months later.

For the formal presentation to leadership, each team was encouraged to be creative in presenting its recommendations—taking unique approaches was emblematic of the innovative nature of the project. Teams used PowerPoint, Prezi, and even a well-rehearsed skit to make their pitches for more than 40 total recommendations.

Immediately following the formal presentation, the group’s achievements were recognized and celebrated with a mixer at a brewpub after regular working hours. The event was important for not only showing appreciation to the employees, but also for encouraging them to stay engaged for the implementation process to come.

Following the mixer, Shift steering committee participants began meeting again to discuss implementation. The group polled city management and all members of the Shift project team for guidance on which recommendations to implement first.

Using feedback and voting among themselves, the committee settled on 10 quick-win implementations that could be carried out within a year and with minimal cost. The idea was to build momentum and legitimacy for the Shift group.

At the time this article was written, the Shift group was working on implementing its first round of recommendations.

**Key Recommendations**

Given millennials’ reputation for thinking differently than previous generations, it came as some surprise to both city leadership and the Shift group itself that many recommendations were not new, out-of-left-field ideas. Most recommendations were ideas the organization considered in the past but never successfully implemented.

In fact, many local governments have already carried out many of the group’s individual ideas. Some of the best-regarded recommendations for each of the six

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**Call for Nominations!**

If you look around you’ll find local government workers improving community quality of life every day. Some are in very public roles — like police officers or teachers. Others maintain the roads, collect recycling, or beautify parks and public spaces.

*Life, Well Run* is once again capturing profiles of these Community Heroes who work with professional city, town, and county managers and have made an impact on the lives of your residents.

*Life, Well Run* is accepting nominations until January 31, 2017.

Do you know a local government Community Hero like Sargeant Saemi Kitchens or Warren Gaskill? Nominate your heroes today at lifewellrun.org/community-heroes.

Questions? Please contact lifewellrun@icma.org.
Shift teams include:

**Benefits.** Focus primarily on enhanced work-life integration with alternative work methods, including flex schedules and telecommuting (where appropriate in the organization); merit compensation bonuses for high-performing employees; and extra-time-off bonuses for high-performing employees (e.g., perhaps offering a three-week sabbatical after 10 years of excellent performance).

**Culture and philosophy.** Revise the annual employee evaluation to feature more custom, quantifiable performance dimensions, including encouraging supervisors to focus on employee overall well-being and showing employees their ideas are heard and appreciated. Do this by establishing a small employee innovation team to assist their peers in developing and presenting their innovations to management.

**Employee development.** Create a year-long, onboarding process for new hires to help them better understand their role in impacting the organization and community. The process includes activities to be completed each quarter, including a communitywide tour, peer-to-peer mentoring, and crafting an individual development plan.

**Recruiting and hiring.** Focus on recruitment with a mobile-friendly jobs website; reduce time-to-hire with an in-house, customizable, defined hiring plan tool that provides hiring supervisors with steps to carry out expedited 30-day, standard 60-day, and specialty 90-day hires.

**Physical environment.** Update conference rooms to promote creativity and collaboration among users. Create comfortable outdoor workspaces with reliable Wi-Fi and other productivity technologies.

**Marketing and communications.** Encourage use of social media by employees to promote the organization and the community. Employees will learn more about their community, become more invested, and will be likely to stay with the organization. Job candidates will have the community showcased in a fun and engaging way.

**Lessons Learned**

As with any major project, the city experienced a few surprises:

- Older employees wanted to be given a voice along with their millennial colleagues. We heard a lot of, “Millennials are not the only ones who will benefit from this project—we like these things, too.” Aurora abandoned the notion of Shift being a millennial-oriented project early in the process.
- Communicating to job candidates and existing employees about the good one can do by working for a local government is critical. While Shift had a team dedicated to exploring this topic, we found that all teams found it important to infuse that message into their recommendations.
- The city already provides a lot of the benefits younger employees are looking for. It was just a matter of doing a better job at communicating to employees all the benefits offered.
- Employees need wide latitude to propose ideas. Project sponsors were initially concerned about receiving wild, non-starter ideas. They were surprised to see that recommendations were reasonable and worthy of being taken seriously.

The process can be empowering and fun for you and your staff all at the same time. After all, your millennials would not have it any other way.

To read more about Aurora’s next generation workplace experience, visit https://www.auroragov.org/city_hall/city_finances_budget/city_budget/other_reports__documents.

**ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES:**


MICHAEL LAWSON is manager of special projects, Aurora, Colorado (mlawson@auroragov.org).
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employees to promote the organization and community. The process includes activities in impacting the organization and communicating with a mobile-friendly jobs website; mentoring, and crafting an individual annual employee evaluation to feature performance.

Culture and philosophy.

• Older employees wanted to be given more invested, and will be likely to stay more about their community, become more familiar with the people they serve, and help them better understand their role in working for the organization.

• Managers do not need to have all the answers beforehand. Chances are, they will likely jump at the opportunity to have a voice along with their millennial colleagues. We heard a lot of, “Millennials are not the only ones who have a voice.”

• Most recommendations from Aurora’s project is a must, Aurora relied on young employees involved in the project to assist their peers in developing and presenting their innovation. The government is critical. While Shift will benefit from this project—we will likely jump at the opportunity to have a voice along with their millennial colleagues. We heard a lot of, “Millennials are not the only ones who have a voice.”

• An organization does not need a large group of millennials to make real progress. If your organization is looking for reasons to be encouraged:

• Employees need wide latitude to pursue their recommendations. Project sponsors were initially concerned about receiving wild, non-starter ideas. They were surprised to see that recommendations were reasonable and worthy of being taken seriously.

• Human resources needs to be involved in the process. Do they know how to best support the process? Are they on board? The process can be empowering and fun for you and your staff all at the same time. After all, your millennials would not have it any other way.

Lessons Learned

• An organization does not need a large group of millennials to make real progress. If your organization is looking for reasons to be encouraged:

Reasons to Be Encouraged

The city already provides a lot of enhancement work-life dimensions, including encouraging more custom, quantifiable performance metrics and extra-time-off bonuses for high-performing young employees. The city_finances___budget/city_budget/ has abandoned the notion of Shift being a three-week sabbatical after 10 years of service career. Robertson School of Government

Christian Leadership to Change the World

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES:

MICHAEL LAWSON

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AADE-F8502DEDCAF&sid=f8edba0f-dc23-47f6-9f92-4592cb9dd0f3.

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We Teach It.

We Don’t Talk Politics.
At any given moment, any local government could be facing a number of legal issues that are big or small, common or obscure. So an article promising to totally prepare managers for an uncertain future can only underdeliver. This article aims to inform on legal issues managers should know about because they will affect local governments universally—federal regulations—or because they are too big to ignore, even if they won’t affect every city and county in the United States.

Sign Codes and Panhandling Ordinances

It might not be obvious what signs and panhandling have in common, but they were both significantly affected by the Supreme Court’s 2015 decision in Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Arizona. According to a 2016 federal court opinion: “Reed represents a drastic change in First Amendment jurisprudence.” The Court held for the first time that content-based regulations are subject to strict scrutiny—meaning they are almost always legally fatal. Almost all sign codes contain content-based regulations. Also, the Court adopted a broader definition of content-based regulation than it had in the past. “Government regulation of speech is content based if a law applies to particular speech because of the topic discussed or the idea or message expressed.” Most sign codes contain content-based regulations as the term is understood in Reed. For example, the city of Norfolk, Virginia’s definition of a sign excluded flags and works of art not related to a product or service. Before Reed, a federal appeals court held that this definition wasn’t content based. After Reed, the same court concluded it was content based. So following Reed, most local governments need to update their sign codes; however, Reed doesn’t just apply to sign codes. Lower courts have held content-based restrictions that governments impose on speech, including laws that ban voters from taking ballot selfies and laws where candidates pretend to be incumbents, are now also subject to strict scrutiny.

Local governments are seeing the effects of Reed in the case of ordinances that limit panhandling. Lower courts have consistently struck down these ordinances following Reed. After all, panhandling is speech and these ordinances only ban one type of speech.

Fair Housing Act Lawsuits

It is a strange case where local governments are suing someone else rather than being sued themselves. At least 12 cities and counties have sued banks over

TAKEAWAYS

› Updating sign codes and panhandling ordinances remains imperative for local governments following the Supreme Court’s decision in Reed.
› Local governments will need to make changes per overtime final regulations and soon-to-be proposed website accessibility regulations.
› Debtor’s prison litigation and fair housing lawsuits may also impact cities and counties.

Legal agenda for local governments

By Lisa Soronen

ON THE DOCKET IN 2017
At any given moment, any local government could be facing a number of legal issues that are big or small, common or obscure. So an article promising to totally prepare managers for an uncertain future can only underdeliver.

This article aims to inform on legal issues managers should know about because they will affect local governments universally—federal regulations—or because they are too big to ignore, even if they won’t affect every city and county in the United States.

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› Local governments will need to make changes per overtime final regulations and soon-to-be proposed website accessibility regulations.

› Debtor’s prison litigation and fair housing lawsuits may also impact cities and counties.

Miami claims that Wells Fargo and Bank of America targeted African American and Latino customers in the city for predatory loans that carried more risk, steeper fees, and higher costs than those offered to identically situated Caucasian customers. The city further claims the banks’ lending policies caused minority-owned property to fall into unnecessary or premature foreclosure.

The FHA makes it unlawful for banks to discriminate against mortgage recipients on the basis of race. To bring a lawsuit under FHA, Miami must have statutory standing: in other words, “a cause of action under the statute.” The lower court ruled that Miami has standing to sue the banks.

**New Overtime Regulations**

According to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), white-collar or bona fide executive, administrative, or professional employees do not have to be paid overtime if they work more than 40 hours a week. Department of Labor (DOL) regulations adopted shortly after FLSA was adopted in 1938 state that employees must perform specific duties and earn a certain salary to be exempt from overtime as a white-collar employee.

On May 23, 2016, the DOL issued final rules nearly doubling the previous salary level test from $23,660 a year to $47,476 a year. The final regulations also automatically update the salary level every three years. The final rule is expected to extend overtime protections to more than four million workers.

At the time this article was written, more than 20 states had sued DOL, seeking an injunction preventing the rules from taking effect on December 1, 2016. Among other things, states argue that

**Website Accessibility Regulations**

In May 2016, Department of Justice (DOJ) released a Supplemental Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (SANPRM) asking for comments on the “potential application of technical requirements” to make state and local government websites accessible per Title II of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).

DOJ’s current regulations did not include specific requirements for web accessibility, but DOJ has long held the position that Title II covers public entities’ websites.

Among many other things, DOJ is contemplating adopting WCAG 2.0 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines), created by the World Wide Web Consortium, an international community where the public collaborates to develop web standards.

WCAG 2.0 has three levels of accessibility: A, AA, and AAA. These standards cover such topics as keyboard navigability; text enlargement; minimum contrast ratios; limiting the use of color; text descriptions for audio, images, and headings; video captioning; and more.

DOJ is contemplating adopting the AA standard (except live video captioning) to take effect within two years of promulgating the final rule. For live captioning, DOJ suggests three years.

The State and Local Legal Center (SLLC), the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), and other national organizations submitted comments to DOJ explaining how state and local governments would be impacted by this change.

The comments recommend that at this point, compliance with web accessibility standards should be voluntary for all state and local governments. To the extent the DOJ mandates compliance with a set standard, the comments suggest a tiered approach is warranted, which grants sufficient time for technology and support infrastructure to advance.

An indefinite exception with compliance is also recommended for smaller governments representing less than 200,000 people. For public entities that do not qualify for an exemption based on population, revenue, staffing, and budgetary constraints should be considered in a process for granting special exceptions for public entities that are overly burdened by the compliance standards.

Only time will tell what final web accessibility regulations DOJ adopts.

**“Debtor’s Prison” Lawsuits**

Officer Darren Wilson’s shooting of Michael Brown in 2014 led to a DOJ investigation of the Ferguson, Missouri, police department. The first sentence of the DOJ report noted that the primary goal of Ferguson’s municipal court system was not “administering justice or protecting the rights of the accused, but of maximizing revenue.”
The report went on to describe a “debtor’s prison” system where Ferguson assessed high fines for minor offenses without determining a defendant’s ability to pay. If the defendant missed a payment, a warrant was issued for his or her arrest. If he or she was caught, he or she was likely to be incarcerated.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly stated that before courts convert unpaid criminal fines into jail time they must make a reasonable inquiry into the defendant’s ability to pay. Defendants must make “all reasonable efforts to pay,” including seeking work and borrowing money. If they still can’t pay, they may not be automatically imprisoned without considering alternative means of punishing them.

Since the Ferguson report was issued, debtor’s prison cases have been brought against local governments in at least 12 states. Claims include that municipal courts failed to determine indigency, failed to tell defendants they could request an indigency determination, and failed to consider alternative punishments.

It is noteworthy that even if a municipal court is, in effect, operating a debtor’s prison, the local government may not be liable. In March 2016, for example, a federal district court in Texas dismissed a debtor’s prison case against the city of Austin, Texas. The case involved a single mother of seven who was jailed for two weeks because she could not pay traffic tickets without her ability to pay being determined.

Local governments can only be liable where they cause the constitutional violation, the court reasoned. Here a municipal judge acting in a judicial capacity caused the constitutional violation.

Walker v. City of Calhoun, Georgia, is a case to watch as it possibly heads to the Supreme Court. Maurice Walker was arrested for being a pedestrian under the influence, could not afford the $160 cash bond, and was jailed for 11 days before he could see a judge.

The issue in the case is whether an arrestee can be jailed temporarily because he or she cannot afford bail. The Supreme Court has never decided an indigency-based claim in the bail context.

Changes on the Horizon

When President-elect Donald Trump takes office, different regulatory and enforcement priorities will be devised and put into action. When the Supreme Court acquires a ninth justice and new justices in years to come, the Court may change direction on issues affecting local governments.

So new legal trends and hot issues will continue to emerge. For now, keep your eyes on these issues as they unfold in your communities and in courts across the country. 

LISA SORONEN is executive director, State and Local Legal Center, Washington, D.C. (lsoronen@sso.org).
BUILDING COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP
A new tool to help guide public sector initiatives

Management and leadership are complicated and involve both strategic and tactical execution on new initiatives for success. In the early 1990s, private sector companies started to use the balanced scorecard to develop a more strategic approach to their operations. The balanced scorecard helps organizations improve the articulation and understanding of their strategies.

The scorecard, as illustrated in Figure 1, also provides a framework for building strategies, addressing financial issues and customer service perspectives, creating internal processes aligned to customer needs, and creating an environment supporting technology, organizational learning, and continuous change.

**Unique Challenges Require Unique Scorecard**
Leaders in the public sector need a scorecard tailored to their unique needs and challenges. The scorecard should serve as a compass for aligning strategy with the tactical implementation of new initiatives and promote collaborative decision making. One such public sector scorecard or tool is called 4 Square Management (see Figure 2, page 28).

The vacuum that is often created without this alignment results in new initiatives that create some unintended consequences when they are implemented.

A simple but impactful example of unintended consequences is critical to more effective governance.

A manager can often overlook and not plan for the challenges that change may bring to her or his organization. The fundamental flaw in most innovators’ strategies is that they focus on their innovations—on what they are trying to do—rather than on understanding how the larger culture structure and norms will react to their efforts.1

Staying on course is not easy in the public sector. A tool or compass that sets a framework for both strategy and implementation of that strategy would be useful. Public sector environments have significantly more transparency than the private sector.

The actions of governing boards that direct management are conducted in the proverbial fish bowl of public opinion.

This public opinion that is increasingly being shaped and directed by print and social media can sometimes result in reactionary instead of strategic decisions.

A checklist for public sector leaders could provide a compass to maneuver through the development and implementation of new initiatives. The key is finding the balance between these factors to successfully implement new initiatives:

- Stakeholders’ and customers’ expectations.
- Governing boards’ desire to meet those expectations through policy direction.
- Management (executive leadership) capacity to implement the policy.
- Capacity of employees to execute the policy for the stakeholders/customers.

(continued on page 28)
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The vacuum that is often created without this alignment results in new initiatives that create some unexpected consequences when they are implemented. A simple but impactful example of unexpected consequences is when a governing board acts on a policy, but the staffing and long-term financial resources to effectively implement the policy are not considered. Using a tool that provides a clear compass to guide an organization so that it avoids the potential pitfalls of these unintended consequences is critical to more effective governance.

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FIGURE 1. The Balanced Scorecard.

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I’m glad the Harvard professors warned us by saying, “Upon returning home, people may be confused when you do not respond as you did previously.” Such is the nature of a three-week, immersive learning experience where you are repeatedly encouraged to challenge your thinking, be playful, practice new approaches, and consider alternative methods.

Having the opportunity to disconnect from the everyday routine, establish a space for learning, and find space for critical thinking can spark magic. Being with a group of 59 amazing, committed, engaged, and similarly motivated people creates an experience that will stay with you a lifetime. The experience was energizing and inspiring; I was reminded why I chose a career in public service.

Seeking New Approaches

Three weeks was indeed a long time to be gone from home and work. I oversee seven departments at Ramsey County, Minnesota, with a budget of some $150 million. Outside of the everyday work I do, I share responsibility for moving forward the county board’s goals around racial equity and economic prosperity. This includes ensuring that we are focused on well-being, prosperity, opportunity, and accountability for the county’s more than 525,000 residents.

My job is to lead these departments, and empower leaders in our organization to work collaboratively to accomplish our goals. I wanted to learn new approaches to be a more effective leader and to use this experience to the greatest advantage for my organization and community.

In the small black notebook they gave each of us, I took copious notes. On the first couple of pages, I distilled down the most precious thoughts and advice given to us every day. Reading them now, after being back from Cambridge, Massachusetts, for several months, I realize that I was truly immersed.

This program creates an environment that enables you to think about what you want to “do” and not what you want to “be.” I share these insights:

- Leadership “on the edge” is difficult and deeply challenging. In the end, it is the one thing that can create lasting change; however, you must remember that this is a marathon, not a sprint. Steel yourself for difficulty; challenge yourself to “lean in.”
- Intentionality in all that we do is essential. Frequently, we get one “bite at the apple,” and we can’t let it go to waste.
- Perseverance is necessary to achieving our goals. Tailoring that impulse to specific people and situations is essential for effectiveness.
- Managing conflict is a necessary part of our work. Conflict can and should be used for strategic purposes.
- Taking on and solving difficult challenges represents our comparative advantage as professional public managers. I came away convinced that the public sector is better at this than any other.
- Elected officials and appointed officials must form effective teams to move difficult and challenging work
forward. These positive relationships are often the difference between success and failure.

The faculty and staff of Harvard’s Executive Education program are extraordinary. Many of us, for example, had read Marty Linsky’s book *Leadership on the Line* in the early 2000s when it was published. We spent several days learning from Linsky and his experiences in local and state government.

The Kennedy School provided its best and brightest each day, and the breadth and depth of knowledge that faculty imparted was something like a three-week MPA program.

Linsky challenged us, pushing back on our mid-career assumptions, and he made us think deeply and critically about our role as leaders—exhorting us to “find the edge of your scope of authority and exert your power and influence to make change.” He reminded us that people do not resist change, they resist loss; leadership is about disappointing people at a rate they can accept.

This is especially challenging in a culture that places high value on telling people what they want to hear, not what they need to listen for.

Upon reflection, this was perhaps the most valuable part of my experience at Harvard—the time and guidance to think about leadership on a deeper level, and to consider my role in leading change over the next “half” of my career.

It is increasingly clear to many of us in government that our communities need public servants who can recognize challenges and provide the leadership needed to help overcome them.

**A Valued Opportunity**

It was a particular honor to spend many hours with Dan Fenn, a member of John F. Kennedy’s White House staff, one of Harvard’s youngest assistant deans at age 23, and the first director of the JFK Library in Boston. Dan is now 93 years young and still teaching at the Kennedy School.

His sparkling wit and brilliant observations inspired us to look anew at our various professions in public service. It was a special honor to have him with us on our last night at the celebratory dinner at the Harvard Faculty Club.

To say the experience changed my life would be an understatement, but that phrase captures some of what I have taken away from Harvard. Our class members have kept in touch through e-mail, social media, and personal visits, and we now have friends and colleagues all over the world.

ICMA’s sponsorship of this scholarship is incredibly valuable. I want to express my deep gratitude to The Ferguson Group, eCivis, and ICMA for the opportunity to attend the 2016 Harvard Kennedy School Senior Executives in State and Local program. RM

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**TOWARD GLOBAL PROFESSIONALISM**

I am currently serving as president of Slovakia’s city managers association and will be doing so until March 2019. My goal is to transform the Slovak City Managers’ Association into a well-managed and highly professional organization accepted within Slovakia and the European Union.

As the first city manager from continental Europe who was elected to serve as vice president of the International City/County Management Association’s executive board in its 104-year history, I have done the most I could to show the pride I have in the professional spirit of local government leadership in central Europe.

By completing the executive education program of the Harvard Kennedy School, I am more widely acknowledged in the European Union and within its institutions. In the short term, I am representing local government as an expert within Slovakia and also in the SlovAID programs, which are programs for local governments in non-EU countries sponsored by Slovakia.

My Harvard education also assists me in my long-term goal to help develop local government professionals in the EU and worldwide. Thanks to Harvard, I am more recognized by my peers in the profession and by institutions not only in the EU, but anywhere in the world.

The private connections, professional knowledge, and experience exchange are all pluses that will be put to good use in the future at any possible occasion, be it in the EU, United States, or elsewhere.

Professional local government management education should not be a privilege only given to a few well-run cities, but must instead become a worldwide new normal for all local governments. This is why I am thankful to ICMA, The Ferguson Group, and eCivis for enabling me to have the honor of attending the 2016 program. RM

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**PETER AGH** is city manager, Dvory, Slovakia (peter.agh@dvory.sk).
4 Square Management is a tool designed to strategically and tactically guide an organization through a measured process of improving the effectiveness of implementing new initiatives or projects. So how does it work?

Prior to implementing any new initiative, here are questions that should be addressed in each of four categories:

1. Stakeholders’ and customers’ expectations
   - Is this initiative consistent with our value, vision, and mission statements?
   - Is it one of our stated priorities or strategic focus areas?
   - Does it address an immediate and pressing problem that is appropriate for the organization to address?
   - If funding is involved, can this initiative be sustained over the next five years with other competing budget priorities?

2. Governing board’s desire to meet those expectations through policy direction
   - What are the outcomes we will use to determine if this initiative is successful?
   - When will the initiative be reviewed to determine how it is being implemented?

3. Management (executive leadership) capacity to implement the policy
   - Do we have the necessary operational procedures to implement the initiative?
   - If the initiative requires technology, is it in place or do we have to purchase it?
   - Is a performance-measurement system in place to track the outcomes or results of the initiative?
   - Do we have the necessary structure and supervisory capacity to implement the initiative?
   - Do we need a field trip to an organization that has developed and implemented the initiative?
   - What are contingency plans if the initiative has problems while being implemented?
   - What is our communication strategy for the initiative and the spokesperson?

4. Capacity of employees/volunteers to execute the policy for the stakeholders/customers
   - Do we have existing policy direction from an approved general plan or other plan to undertake this initiative?
   - What are the best practices for this initiative?

• Has first-line employee/volunteer input been received on how to implement the initiative effectively?
• Is employee/volunteer training required to implement the initiative?
• How will implementing this initiative impact current work cycles for services?
• How will implementing this initiative affect timelines on implementing any other initiatives directed by the governing board?

How Effective Is This Approach?
Since 2012, 4 Square Management has been used as one approach to help Spokane County, Washington’s Fire District 8 work more effectively to link its strategic planning efforts with priorities of the fire district board and customers, along with its management, employee, financial, and technology capacity to successfully implement projects.

“Before 4 Square Management, the district did not have a consistent method for strategically planning and executing projects,” notes Chief Tony Nielsen. “The development of a new strategic plan was an appropriate time for the district to consider this planning tool for its current and future projects.”

A public sector scorecard like the 4 Square Management tool is adaptable to each organizations’ needs and can provide the platform for implementing a more collaborative approach for leaders. This simple template for governing boards and management to use will help to ensure a new initiative has run the gauntlet for its successful implementation.

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES:
When will the initiative be reviewed to determine if this initiative is successful?

What are the outcomes we will use to assess the initiative's effectiveness?

If funding is involved, can this initiative be sustained over the next five years with other competing budget priorities?

Does it address an immediate and compelling need for the organization to address?

Is it one of our stated priorities or strategic focus areas?

Is this initiative consistent with our current and future projects, and the organization’s mission and values?

For the initiative and the spokesperson?

So how does it work?

FIGURE 2. A Public-Sector Scorecard – 4 Square Management.

Prior to implementing any new initiative, here are questions that should be addressed in each of four categories:


2. Governing board’s desire to meet management minute

3. Management (executive and supervisory capacity to implement the initiative)

4. Capacity of employees/volunteers (bridgegroupllc@gmail.com), and he

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BY JEFF DAVIDSON

PASSION IN THE NEW YEAR

Celebrate it

Do you remember that first day when you assumed your current position? You were a little excited, maybe a little nervous, and chock-full of energy and ideas to make things happen. Your department or your organization was going to shine! Still feel that way?

What team within the same local government is more likely to be productive than another? A growing number of human resource professionals point to the passion that prevails. In his time-tested book The Passion Plan at Work, Richard Chang cites tangible benefits that an organization can derive as a result of the passion that its managers imbue upon the staff.

Attracting the right type of employee. Chang says: “The passion-driven organization appeals to the superstars of the job market.”

Direction and focus. Passion can define the direction an organization takes whether at a regional or local level. The passion of your particular organization, department, or team is the filter through which all decisions are made.

Energy. When a manager is passionate about the organization, about his or her work, and about the organization’s employees, everyone benefits. Staff can become supercharged.

On a daily basis, there is an extra level of energy that can empower the organization and often make a huge difference between merely getting the job done and performing with distinction.

Loyalty. Relationships with employees that are built on passion have a higher probability of succeeding. It’s been found repeatedly that money is no substitute for the connection a manager can make with the staff, more so with a younger-aged staff.

Unity. When managers, team leaders, and employees share a common passion, they stand on common ground. “They are connected on a deeper level to achieving the organization’s objectives,” says Chang.

Each incident and each day may not go smoothly—this is not to say there won’t be some friction here and there—but, overall, passion is a unifying element for which there is little substitute.

Heightened performance. Passion helps drive improvements in both quality and quantity of work that staff will perform. “If passion is alive and well at work,” says Chang, “your organization has a clear advantage over its competitors.”

Keep in Touch With Your Passion

On an individual basis, many managers can muster significant levels of passion when it comes to running an organization, serving residents, reaching goals, or completing a short-term campaign. The passion discussed here, though, involves making a leap from being a reason-based manager to one who is also a passion-driven manager (not that there’s anything wrong with reason).

Too often, managers lose touch with the passions that they once drew upon to energize themselves and those around them. Chang says that when you reclarify what it is you want to achieve and find that your purpose is in alignment with your core passion, such passion will become a sustaining element of your work.

Influencing With Passion

Be on the lookout for what Chang calls “purpose by default.” If your purpose fails to reflect your true, underlying passion, this can lead to a lack of focus and less-than-desirable performance on the part of you and your staff.

Any changes or additions to your daily routine should be incorporated on a gradual scale. You have to be careful; the novelty you might want to introduce could confuse others. Staff might not be able to accept or benefit from this new approach if you spring it on them too quickly.

Once your passion begins to take effect, you might find it easier to influence staff who seek to be involved with the energy that derives from your passion. Go ahead, ride the wave. We all know take-charge types who, with their positive and infectious attitudes, have been able to amass support from others with seemingly little effort.

Stay close to your passion, and diligently seek to preserve it. It’s a new year, and there is no better time.

JEFF DAVIDSON, MBA, CMC, is principal, Breathing Space® Institute, Raleigh, North Carolina (www.BreathingSpace.com or Jeff@Breathingspace.com). An author and presenter on work-life balance, he holds the world’s only registered trademark from the United States Patent and Trademark Office as “The Work-Life Balance Expert.”®
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- **MIDWEST**: March 8-9 (EPLI); March 9-10 (Summit): Elk Grove, Illinois
- **WEST COAST**: March 22-23 (EPLI); March 23-24 (Summit): Burlingame, California
- **NORTHEAST**: April 5-6 (EPLI); April 6-7 (Summit): Newport, Rhode Island
- **SOUTHEAST**: April 26-27 (EPLI); April 27-28 (Summit): Gatlinburg, Tennessee
- **MOUNTAIN PLAINS**: May 3-4 (EPLI); May 4-5 (Summit): Sandy City, Utah
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