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**ANNUAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM**

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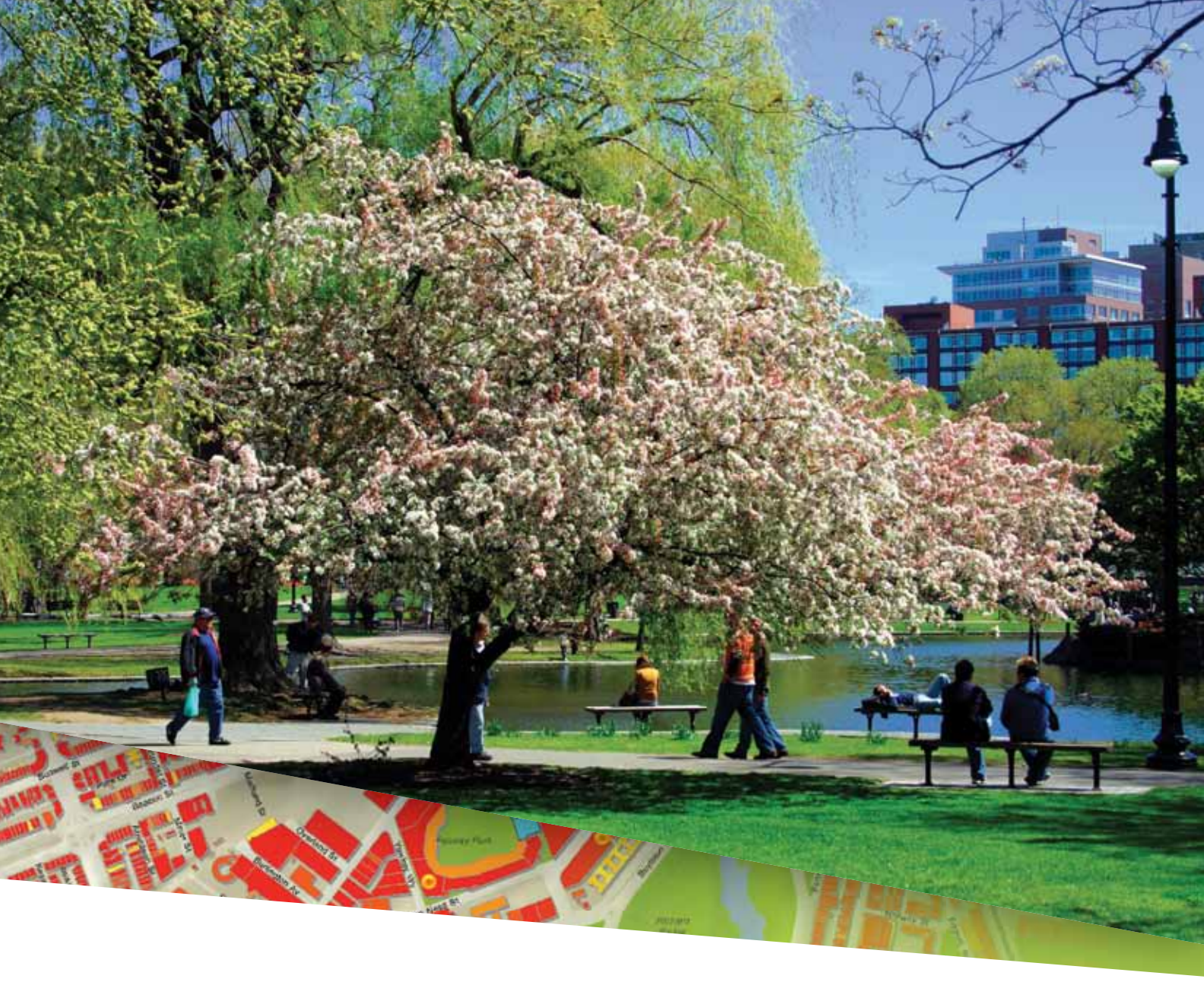

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PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

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This issue of *PM* is available online at icma.org/pm June 1, 2011.

BY MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM

# THE HIGH COST OF SILENCE

## Why reporting wrongdoing is essential

Whether on the front line delivering services or occupying the manager's chair, all employees have a stake in reporting incidents of suspected or actual wrongdoing. An organization's reputation is built—for better or worse—on the conduct of each individual employee. Everyone's conduct really does matter. And that's not just the management cliché of the month.

A collective commitment to raising the red flag when something unethical or illegal is taking place is critical to all. Everyone needs to be willing to report what's happening behind the scenes or even take steps to stop it from happening in the first place. But it's a tough sell. Whistle-blowing feels like a violation of that kindergarten rule not to be a tattletale.

Very few of us enjoy confrontation or being the bad guy who causes trouble for someone else (even if that person deserves it). The lack of certainty about facts and motivations keeps others silent. But the consequences of keeping silent can be significant and harmful.

### Report It

Doing nothing is also like sitting on the sidelines while your colleague falls off the cliff. A public works supervisor, with 15 years on the job, was recently fired for his involvement in the theft of metal from a city demolition job. Sold for scrap, the metal had a value of $5,000.

Several other members of the crew were involved and received disciplinary action. Too bad that someone else on the job site who certainly heard about this scheme didn't point out to fellow workers that this "benefit" wasn't worth the risk. Oh, and also the likelihood that this wouldn't end well.

In another city, the topic of the day at the management team meeting was the recent dismissal of the information technology director. This individual had been recruited from the private sector with high promise for moving the city forward. But he lasted only about a year before the city manager asked for his resignation.

The manager explained to the management team that in several instances the director entered into contracts that violated city policy. This employee continued the practice even after being counseled on the matter. The final straw was his personal relationship with an employee.

As members of the management team talked about their experiences with



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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 worldwide in the pursuit of excellence in local governance.

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DESIGN
**Rock Creek Strategic Marketing**

2010 WINNER EXCEL AWARD

***Public Management (PM)*** (USPS: 449-300) is published monthly except February by ICMA (the International City/County Management Association) at 777 North Capitol Street. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4201. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. The opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ICMA.

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**REPRINTS:** Apply to the editor for permission to reprint any part of the magazine.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** U.S. subscription rate, $46 per year; other countries subscription rate, $68 per year: single copies, $10. Printed in the United States.
Contact: 202/289-4262; subscriptions@icma.org.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Public Management*, ICMA, 777 N. Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201.

**ARTICLE PROPOSALS:** Visit icma.org/pm to see "Editorial Guidelines" for contributors.

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PRINTING
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Laurel, Maryland

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this individual, they were quite startled to realize that they all had inklings that things were not okay, that he just didn't seem to get it about operating in the public sector, and, yes, that they had heard those rumors about his affair.

But—to a person—no one had talked with the individual or raised the issue with the city manager. What was their ethical obligation to address their concerns with their peer? Would an early intervention have produced a better outcome? The result of the team members' reflection was a personal and joint pledge for real, mutual accountability. In practice, this meant having the courage, in private, to call their colleagues on unacceptable conduct. The next step would be directly to the city manager's office, if required.

**BOTTOM LINE? CREATE A CULTURE WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION THAT ACTUALLY ENCOURAGES EMPLOYEES TO REPORT WRONGDOING.**

As a profession, we face the same ethical obligation to hold our colleagues accountable for their conduct. And, yes, it's tough to do. We've walked in their shoes. We relate to the difficulty of having every misstep, big or small, reported in the media and kept alive by the blog analysts.

The ICMA Code of Ethics establishes a uniform and high set of standards for the profession. In a complicated universe, it defines clear lines of acceptable conduct. Some ethical violations, like taking extra compensation or gifts, are obvious. They get the required attention of elected officials, other authorities, and the public. Usually they will be addressed by both the local government and ICMA.

But there is a whole universe of inappropriate conduct where the associated risk and potential damage to the public and the profession may be visible and really understood only by another professional in the field. Therein lies part of the value of self-policing.

### Personal Muscle

After many years of discussion about whether members have an ethical obligation to report incidents of unethical conduct by peers, the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct concluded that we do. In 2004, this guideline was added to the Code: "When becoming aware of a possible violation of the ICMA Code of Ethics, members are encouraged to report the matter to ICMA. In reporting the matter, members may choose to go on record as the complainant or report the matter on a confidential basis."

See something that raises a substantial question as to a colleague's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness to serve the public? See conduct that is damaging to the reputation of other professionals and to the profession? Then you should report it in good faith to ICMA, even knowing that you might not have all the facts. Allow an objective peer review process to sort out those facts and reach an independent judgment.

Bottom line? Create a culture within your organization that actually encourages employees to report wrongdoing. Blow the whistle on your peers. The cost of silence is too high to the profession and to your organization. PM

**MARTHA PEREGO,** ICMA-CM
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# HOW DO YOU STAY INVOLVED IN WHAT'S GOING ON IN EACH DEPARTMENT OF YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

**WOODROW WILSON, JR.**
Parish Administrator/CEO
Caddo Parish Commission
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As a busy county government chief administrative officer who needs to stay engaged with each of my organizational departments, I meet with all department directors during a biweekly staff meeting. Every quarter I visit each department to meet with the employees and update them on what's going on throughout the organization.

Our monthly employee council meeting also has been an extremely effective sounding board for me to stay on top of issues and employees' concerns. The day-to-day updates and communications are handled through e-mail and text messaging.

**SHARON HAMMER, ICMA-CM**
City Administrator
Sun Valley, Idaho
shammer@svidaho.org

I have three principles that help me stay involved in each of Sun Valley's departments:

**1. Open-door policy:** I keep my office door open most of the time. I welcome and encourage staff to stop in at any time to discuss issues.

**2. Personal relationships:** I take the time to build personal relationships with staff, which helps the flow of information. Because we live in a small community, staff members and I are often involved in community events that require us to interact in different capacities. One of the things we do together, for example, is being teammates in a relay race.

**3. No surprises:** I work to instill a culture of no surprises. I am in a much better position to address an issue if I am aware of the issue as it arises, rather than be

**KAY JAMES, ICMA-CM**
City Manager
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I make it a point to get out of my office on a regular basis to see what's going on in each department.

For those departments that are housed in city hall, these are usually impromptu drop-in visits. These somewhat random encounters often make me aware of issues or concerns that might not otherwise come to my attention.

To make sure that I visit each city facility as part of a routine, I hold regularly scheduled on-location meetings with each department head whose office is in a building other than city hall. These meetings sometimes include a "field trip" with the department head to a project site to monitor progress or observe problems. These field-trip drives around the city are a great opportunity for information sharing.

**THOMAS MARKUS, ICMA-CM**
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At this writing, after just three months on the job, I would say that my interactions with staff members are still evolving. Starting over again after more than 21 years in my previous position has given me an opportunity to try new approaches to meeting Iowa City staff.

Before starting, I sent a letter introducing myself to employees and asking how I could best serve as the manager. Employees offered excellent suggestions.

Again, prior to starting, I traveled to my new city to meet both individually and collectively with the administrative staff and department heads. We conducted a SWOT analysis so there was a framework for getting to know each other and the city's concerns.

As I have done throughout my career, I meet with staff every week to discuss agendas and current issues. We started offering a series of cable or YouTube staff interviews, conducted by me, that present current projects and initiatives. These interviews inform both me and the community about Iowa City. PM

# 1 SHARING LESSONS IN COMMUNITY-ORIENTED CRIME PREVENTION

Municipal and police officials from El Salvador visited Santa Ana, California, to learn how that city approaches community-oriented policing and makes it work.

icma.org/COPS

# 2 MADE FOR WALKING

Rancho Cucamonga, California, is using a sidewalk inventory study to help resolve a number of safety, development, and walkability issues.

icma.org/RCsidewalks

# 3 IT'S OUT IN THE OPEN

An online public forum allows Ferguson, Missouri, to seek feedback and input on city topics from its residents.

icma.org/ferguson_public_forum

# 4 YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY CAN DO

Libraries can help local governments tackle critical community priorities. Visit the Knowledge Network to find out how in the report *Maximize the Potential of Your Public Library*.

icma.org/maximize_libraries

By David Ammons and Jonathan Morgan

# STATE-OF-THE-ART MEASURES IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Find out more about the new generation of performance measures

## TAKEAWAYS

**Four messages make this article a compelling read:**

- Use the examples to brainstorm with your staff about meaningful measures for your community.
- Measure things that aren't necessarily 100 percent in your control—they're too important to ignore.
- Start now so that you can establish a benchmark because it's never too late to begin.
- Performance measures have evolved over time to reflect the use of newer approaches and strategies.

For years local governments have invested resources into efforts to spur economic growth. And for years the officials heading most of these economic development initiatives tracked their efforts with little more than output measures—for instance, the number of industrial contacts made or assisted, the number of meetings held or presentations made, the number of information packets or brochures distributed, the number of trade shows attended, and similar measures of activities. They focused on showing that they were trying hard.

More recently, as local governments have gained greater experience with economic development and as more attention has been directed to outcomes and accountability across the range of local government programs and services, the state of the art has begun to change. Now, economic development officials—and those who monitor their performance—are increasingly tuned in to a broader and more meaningful array of measures to document their performance.

### Limited Control of Outcomes

Simple outputs, such as raw counts of meetings and contacts, were appealingly easy to compile and report, but another factor also led to the tendency to report activities rather than results. By reporting numbers of contacts made, meetings held, and brochures distributed, economic development officials reported on things they controlled. Many were reluctant to claim outcomes that were dependent on more—sometimes much more—than their own efforts.

Taxpayers and public officials, however, want results from their investments. They want to see outcomes. The state of the art for measures of economic development has evolved accordingly.

More and more economic development officials are showing a willingness to move beyond the customary raw counts of outputs and have begun to report on outcomes—even outcomes over which they have limited control. Having only limited control might not be as desirable as having complete control, but the absence of full control over an important goal is not a characteristic unique to economic development among local government programs.

Many factors beyond police performance influence crime rates, yet the police are expected to hold the rate down; many outside factors influence the rising incidence of teen pregnancy in a given community—many beyond the full control of a local program established to battle the problem—but the program is expected to make a dent. Other local government programs also tackle problems that lie beyond the government's full control, often by leveraging the assistance of others.

Limited control is neither unique to economic development among local government programs nor is it likely to be considered an adequate alibi for unsatisfactory results. Although far short of *absolute* control, limited control is by no means the same as *no control*.

Economic development efforts can influence outcomes; otherwise, local governments would have little reason to fund them. Economic development outcomes—at least in the form of intermediate outcomes—are now being reported by local governments.

## Results in Raw Terms

Some localities have supplemented their workload measures with measures that demonstrate results. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents to a 2009 survey conducted by ICMA and the National League of Cities reported that they used performance measures to track outcomes specified in the economic development plans of their cities and counties.

Increasingly, local governments are reporting on new capital invested, jobs created, and businesses attracted or retained. Measures from Austin, Texas; Olathe, Kansas; and Scottsdale, Arizona, for example, show important characteristics of economic development: investment, new jobs, downtown construction, and new business licenses (see Table 1).

Economic development officials in these cities are not claiming sole

**TABLE 1.** Tracking Economic Development Results in Raw Numbers: **Examples from Selected Cities**

| COMMUNITY | IMPACT |
|---|---|
| Austin, Texas | Dollar amount of investment created through economic development efforts: $60,200,000 |
| | Number of new jobs created through economic development efforts: 1,368 (2008) |
| Olathe, Kansas | Value of new construction downtown: $2.2 million (2007); $5.1 million (2008) |
| Scottsdale, Arizona | Number of business licenses issued: 29,100 (2007); 29,900 (2008) |
| | Number of jobs: 142,000 (2007); 145,000 (2008) |

**TABLE 2.** Expanding the Tax Base: **Selected Examples**

| COMMUNITY | MEASUREMENTS OF AN EXPANDING TAX BASE |
|---|---|
| | **Annual growth** |
| Olathe, Kansas | Growth in appraised value of downtown: 22% (2007); 7% (2008) |
| Oklahoma City, Oklahoma | Percentage increase in assessed values of business improvement district properties: 14% (2009) |
| Austin, Texas | Percentage increase in property tax valuation in downtown public improvement district: 9.7% (2008) |
| Norfolk, Virginia | Percentage increase in business tax base: 3% |
| | Percentage of expansion of the commercial tax base: 3% (2008) |
| | **Growth compared with five-year average** |
| Woodbury, Minnesota | Current-year increase in market value of commercial/industrial property, as a percentage of five-year commercial/industrial market value average: 11.5% (2008) |
| | **Tax base composition** |
| Shoreline, Washington | Percentage of city assessed valuation that is classified commercial: 9.2% (2008) |

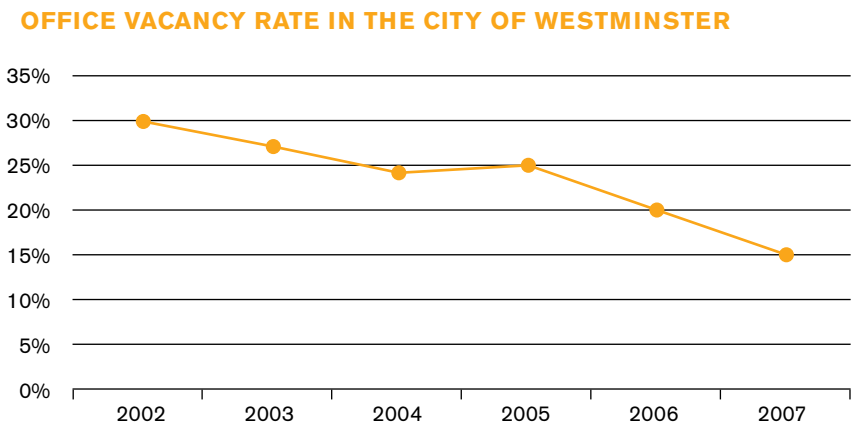
**TABLE 3.** Building Occupancy and Vacancy Rates: **Selected Examples**

| COMMUNITY | RATES OF VACANCY AND OCCUPANCY |
|---|---|
| Grants Pass, Oregon | Target:[1] Downtown building vacancy rate will remain at or below 5%; actual: target met (2008) |
| Bellevue, Washington | Downtown office vacancy rate: 6% (2007) |
| Chandler, Arizona | Retail occupancy rate: 94% (2007); 93% (2008) |
| Fairfax, Virginia (city) | Office space vacancy rate: 8.8% (2008); 10.5% (2009) |
| | Retail space vacancy rate: 4.0% (2008); 6.0% (2009) |
| Raleigh, North Carolina | Office space vacancy rate: downtown, 7%; suburban, 11% (2007) |
| St. Petersburg, Florida | Existing and available office space: 14% |
| | Existing and available industrial space: 4% |
| | Existing and available retail space: 3% (2008) |
| Olathe, Kansas | Percentage of occupied commercial space in downtown: 89% (2007); 87% (2008) |
| Westminster, Colorado | Office vacancy rate: 15% |
| | Retail vacancy rate: 7% (2007) |
| Bowie, Maryland | Retail space vacancy rate: 7.4% |
| | Office space vacancy rate: 17.3% (2009) |
| Minneapolis, Minnesota | Downtown office vacancy rate: 13.0% (2008) |

TABLE 4. Other Measures of Economic Development Success: **Selected Examples**

| COMMUNITY | MEASURES OF SUCCESS |
|---|---|
| | **Downtown vitality** |
| Olathe, Kansas | Percentage of occupied commercial space in downtown: 89% (2007); 87% (2008) |
| | Growth in appraised value of downtown: 22% (2007); 7% (2008) |
| Austin, Texas | Percentage increase of residential units downtown: 44.9% (2008) |
| | Percentage increase in property tax valuation in downtown public improvement district: 9.7% (2008) |
| Plano, Texas | Percentage of leasable civic center space utilized: 75% |
| | Percentage of civic center operation cost recovered through revenue: 76% (2008) |
| | **Hotel occupancy** |
| Minneapolis, Minnesota | Hotel occupancy: 68.7% (2008) |
| Alexandria, Virginia | Percentage of hotel rooms occupied: 66.7% (2007) |
| Scottsdale, Arizona | Scottsdale hotel/motel average occupancy rate: 65% (2008) |
| | **Job retention and creation** |
| Oakland, California | Percentage of potential jobs at risk that are retained: 78% (2006) |
| San Antonio, Texas | Mean hourly wage of jobs created through Economic Development Department incentive programs: $23.79 (2007) |
| Oklahoma City, Oklahoma | Percentage above the Oklahoma City MSA average wage for all new jobs created: 11% (2008); 3% (2009) |
| | **Job-to-resident ratio** |
| San Jose, California | Ratio of San Jose jobs to employed residents: 0.93 jobs per resident (2008); five-year goal: 1.0 jobs per resident |
| | **Leveraging funds** |
| Cincinnati, Ohio | Target: Achieve a 5:1 ratio of outside funds to city funds for community development programs |
| | Target: Leverage private capital for economic development initiatives at an average ratio of 3:1 for each dollar of city funding received on projects each year |
| Oklahoma City, Oklahoma | Dollars of private investment leveraged per dollar of public investment: $49 (2008); $3 (2009) |
| Denver, Colorado (city and county) | Leverage ratio from private debt and equity for business development: 4 to 1 (2008) |
| | **New businesses and business start-ups** |
| Bellevue, Washington | New business registrations in current year as a percentage of all active taxpayer businesses: 16.0% (2007) |
| Williamsburg, Virginia | New business start-ups, as a percentage of all businesses in city: 4.1% (2008) |
| | **Prompt processing** |
| Duncanville, Texas | Percentage of site searches completed within two business days: 100% |
| | Percentage of information packets mailed within 24 hours of request: 100% (2008) |
| Santa Ana, California | Percentage of enterprise zone applications processed within 10 business days: 90% (2008) |
| | **Recruitment** |
| Oakland, California | Percentage of active business leads that choose to locate in Oakland: 25% (2006) |
| | **Sales tax** |
| Shoreline, Washington | Sales tax per capita: $124.26 (2008) |
| Chandler, Arizona | Estimated annual sales tax revenue generated by new retail businesses located with city assistance: $2,942,000 (2007); $2,760,024 (2008); note: retailers might not open for business in year located; however, they have received construction permits. |
| Scottsdale, Arizona | Percentage increase in sales tax revenue: 1% (2008) |
| | **Tourism and convention center** |
| Anaheim, California | Annual occupancy percentage (Exhibit Halls A–D only): 69% (2007) |
| Juneau, Alaska | Percentage of rooms scheduled compared with percentage available: 40% |
| | Number of days facility scheduled compared with number of days with no rentals: 340:24 (2007) |
| Phoenix, Arizona | Convention center occupancy rate (square feet occupancy): 34% (2007) |
| | **Training and mentoring success** |
| Grand Rapids, Michigan | Percentage of participants in mentoring program for microenterprise business owners who reach business goal and increase sales, profits, job creation, or job retention within 12 months: 72.7% (8 of 11) (2008) |
| | Percentage of graduates of 15-week advanced entrepreneurial training course or recipients of extensive individualized business planning and technical assistance who opened or expanded or improved a microenterprise by increasing sales or providing new jobs within 12 months: 58.3% (14 of 24) (2008) |

FIGURE 1. Office Vacancy Rate: **Westminster, Colorado.**




**Source:** City of Westminster, Colorado, Take A Closer Look: How Performance Measures Build a Better City–2007 Performance Report (April 2008), p. 48.

responsibility for any advances from one year's number to the next, but they are suggesting that they have had a role in influencing the results.

## Results in Terms that Could Serve as Benchmarks for Others

Among the new generation of economic development measures are some that report performance in a manner that could serve as useful benchmarks for others. These are outcome measures that convert raw improvement into percentage improvement or, better yet, into measures that reflect conditions of economic development vitality that can serve as inspiration to other communities.

Communities often establish economic development programs with a principal hope of boosting the local tax base. Increasingly, these programs are reporting data relating to that goal (see Table 2).

A sure sign of economic vitality is a high occupancy or low vacancy rate for existing office, retail, and industrial buildings. Of course, this can be a moving target. Achieving a low vacancy rate is likely to spur new construction with new vacancies, perhaps causing the vacancy rate to edge upward—but the tax base will get a boost.

The occupancy or vacancy rates reported by economic development programs in several local governments are shown in Table 3. Progress over time in Westminster, Colorado, is shown in Figure 1.

Other measures focusing on different aspects of economic development success are also being reported by various programs (see Table 4). Each of these measures goes well beyond simple counts of activities and provides an indicator of quality or results.

Different clusters of measures have been selected by different communities. A set of complementary measures for the city and county of Denver, Colorado, is shown in Table 5.

Yet another approach to measuring outcomes has been adopted by a few communities that track their standing or progress on national indices of economic vitality (see box on page 10). Centralia, Illinois, for example, tracks its economic strength ranking through a feature of the POLICOM Corporation national rankings; and Mesa, Arizona, reports new jobs created on the basis of metrics compiled for metropolitan regions by the Milken Institute and Greenstreet Real Estate Partners.

Although these national ratings typically pertain to entire metro areas rather than to individual communities, the economic development programs that choose to include metro area rankings among their measures implicitly acknowledge the link between the success of the region and their own.

TABLE 5. Asset-Building and Wealth Creation Indicators: **Denver, Colorado**

| INDICATORS | 2008 ACTUAL |
|---|---|
| Unemployment rate | 5.5% |
| Percentage of owner-occupied households | 55.56% |
| Percentage of renter-occupied households | 44.44% |
| Percentage of Denver residents living below the poverty level | 17.70% |
| Median household income | $51,705 |
| Number of new full and part-time jobs that the Division of Business Development was directly or indirectly involved in creating | 103 |
| Number of businesses and entrepreneurs served by the Business Assistance Center | 2,844 |
| Leverage ratio from private debt and equity | 4:1 |

**Source:** City and County of Denver, Colorado, Mayor's Proposed 2010 Budget, pp. 123, 126.

## Value of Advances in Results-Focused Measures

Leading economic development programs are increasingly focused on results. Several have also demonstrated a willingness to declare their results in a format that permits others to compare their own results with the results of these leaders. Some have even tied their claims of success to advancement in national rankings.

These advances in performance reporting provide other program models of better measurement. Perhaps more important, this approach to performance measurement can increase other programs' aspirations to achieve similar results.

## Looking Ahead: New Strategies, New Measures

A changing economy, major shifts in industrial structure, and increased global competition for jobs and private investment have challenged traditional approaches to economic development and led local governments to pursue new job creation strategies. What had been an

almost exclusive focus on marketing and industrial recruitment is being augmented by approaches that emphasize homegrown sources of economic activity—efforts that develop entrepreneurial skills, creativity and talent, and promote innovation.

The cutting edge of economic development performance measurement reflects the reality that economic development has expanded to become so much more than activities aimed at recruiting large manufacturing facilities or filling commercial office buildings. Some analysts call for new metrics that are better aligned with the dynamics of a knowledge-based, global economy and that use regional economies, not political jurisdictions, as the units of analysis.[1]

This approach to measuring performance in economic development emphasizes outcome metrics focusing on the number of high-tech jobs, levels of personal income, and number of new businesses as well as indicators that gauge the local assets that can be thought of as the "inputs" to regional competitiveness. These assets include a skilled workforce, ample financial capital, and a community's innovative capacity.

The new set of performance measures will reflect the fact that so much of what communities do now to promote economic development involves enhancing local and regional competitiveness and boosting the local capacity to support private investment and economic growth from both within and without. This new approach to measuring success will assume that economic growth, as measured by a quantitative increase in certain indicators—jobs, capital investment, and tax base, for example—is an intermediate outcome that should lead to qualitative improvements in a local and regional economy over the longer term.

Communities, therefore, will be following Denver's lead (as shown in Table 5) and will be emphasizing such indicators as job quality, wealth creation, economic diversification, and sustainability. PM

1 Eva Klein, "Your Regional Knowledge Economy Strategy: Is It Succeeding?" *Economic Development America* (Spring 2007), pp. 26–29.

## USE RANKINGS AS BENCHMARKS

**SOME ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS** have begun to use national rankings as a component of their sets of performance measures. Several such rating systems are available. The "Best-Performing Cities Index," compiled by the Milken Institute and Greenstreet Real Estate Partners, ranks U.S. metropolitan areas from top to bottom according to their performance in creating and sustaining jobs and economic growth (http://bestcities.milkeninstitute.org).

Another ranking—the "State of Metro America" project of the Brookings Institution—focuses broadly, beyond economic development alone, but it includes individual rankings of metro areas on such indicators as median household income and hourly wages (www.brookings.edu/metro/StateOfMetroAmerica).

POLICOM's annual "Economic Strength Rankings" of 366 metro areas offers an alternative scoring system that features economic stability and consistency of growth among a variety of other factors in gauging economic strength (www.policom.com/metrorank.htm).

Still other rating systems emphasize a given locale's capacity for innovation. A set of metro rankings by the Progressive Policy Institute focuses on the new economy and emphasizes knowledge jobs, globalization, the digital economy, and innovation capacity (www.neweconomyindex.org/metro/index.html).

Another—this one by Purdue University's Center for Regional Development, Indiana University's Indiana Business Research Center, and other partners—is called the "Innovation in American Regions" project (www.statsamerica.org).

## VALUE OF CITIZEN SURVEYS

**SURVEYS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS** can be an important source of information that can supplement national surveys and rankings. Residents who are happy with the overall image or reputation of their community can be a potential driver of future development.

Similarly, residents' perceptions of the speed of job growth and economic opportunities provide a window on the prospects for economic development. Survey questions that ask whether a resident would recommend living in his or her community help to measure and assess the climate for growth and economic development.

Over time, results from citizen surveys provide a way of assessing the extent that economic development tactics are influencing public perceptions. These perceptions, in turn, may then influence future economic development.

For precise wording of survey questions about resident perceptions that are included in the National Citizen Survey™ as well as other performance measures, visit icma.org/ncs and icma.org/performance.

**– Mike Lawson, director, ICMA Center for Performance Measurement™**
**Washington, D.C.**

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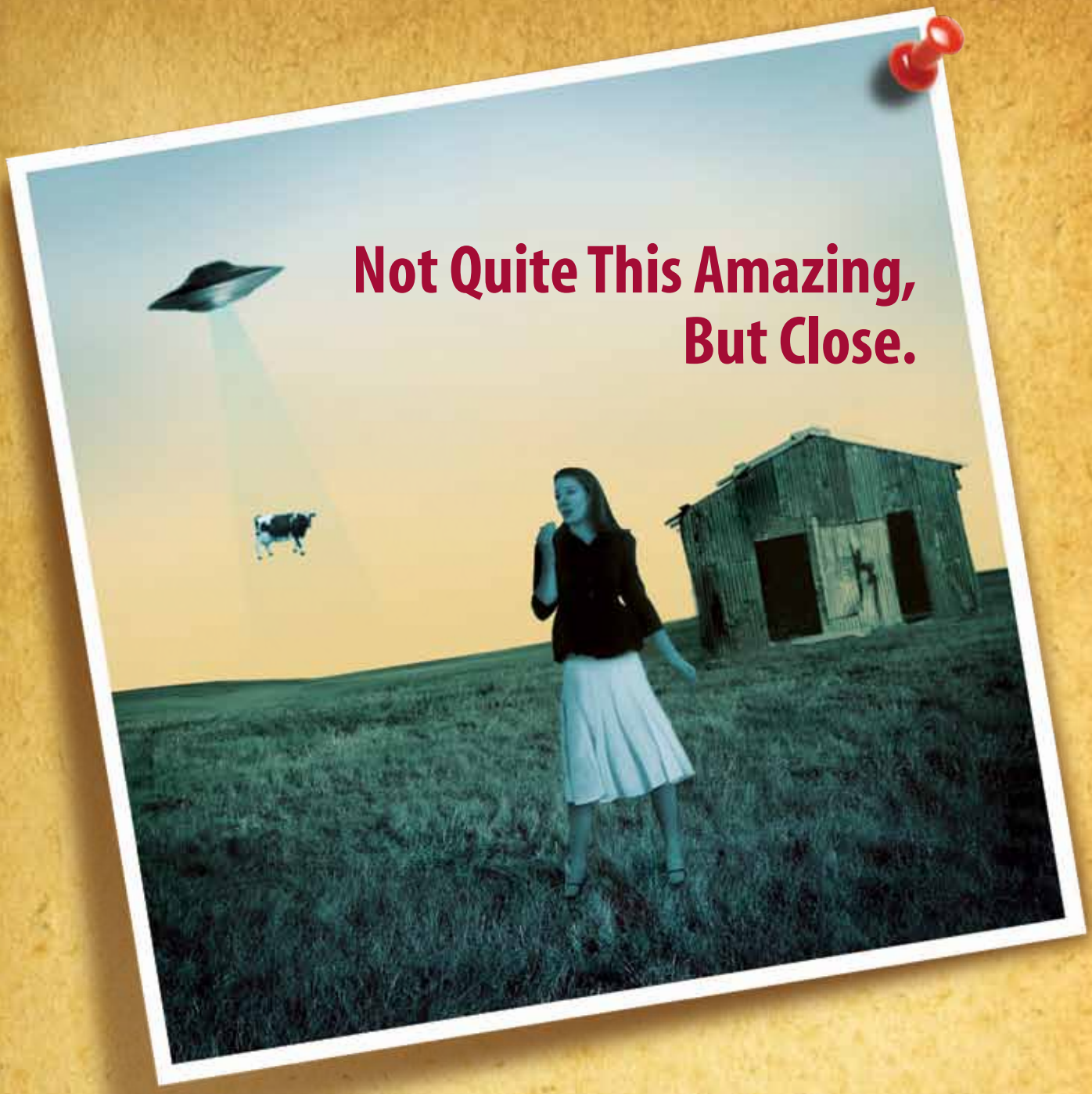


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By Aden Hogan, Jr., ICMA-CM

# MANAGING THE UNTHINKABLE

## KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL DISASTER RESPONSES

### TAKEAWAYS

**Reading this article can help you answer these questions for your own community:**

- If the worst disaster you can imagine happens, how will you quickly make the key response decisions?
- What are the most important things your emergency response plan should focus on?
- How will you manage time, people, and resources when your normal protocols no longer work?

I was recently asked to speak to city staff in my neighboring community of Ft. Collins, Colorado, on the lessons learned from my experience during the Oklahoma City bombing response in 1995. I thought about what message I'd try to convey in my pending presentation. I began to think about which things have really stuck with me from what we went through during those 17 spring days more than 15 years ago.

My first thought was: How would I be able to accurately articulate the horror of the event on April 19, 1995, something that was so far off the chart from what we had ever imagined? Then I realized that this in itself was a key lesson. The city of Oklahoma City was extremely effective in using the knowledge and information we had already gained in dealing with what we knew might happen.

We had a plan, we had processes, and we had protocols. Our challenge was to apply these elements to something we didn't expect to happen.

## The Plan

Planning for the expected is what we do every day. Being ready to deal with the unexpected is what emergency preparedness is all about. A mass casualty incident like the bombing brings with it challenges that simply aren't a part of our normal emergency planning processes. They are incidents we don't like to think about, but they are very real threats.

I think the first hard lesson for all of us in OKC was the realization that it can happen here! And for us, it meant ramping up our response to catch up with the incident. While our staff members set new paradigms in emergency response, there were things that went wrong. There always are. I believe the key for us was that we never gave up. There was always one more thing we could try, and try we did. We didn't let what we didn't know degrade our response, and we learned what we needed as we went.

Learning while you respond often doesn't turn out well. To have success doing this requires a strong underlying foundation of planning, processes, and preparation. Without this, your response will likely turn out badly. Although we did a great job of emergency planning in Oklahoma City, the scenario of someone setting off a bomb in our downtown wasn't really in the scope of our planning.

Just nine months earlier, we had attended a week-long "all-hazards" course at FEMA's National Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, Maryland. That course is now broken into two programs: preparation and response, and recovery and mitigation. What we learned at EMI paid huge dividends in the days following the bombing.

One of the most important takeaways was the relationships we built with each other. That experience reinforced with me the importance of planning, training, and, most important, capacity building with the people you will rely on to deliver your emergency response. I highly recommend this institute experience for managers.

Being a part of the response to what was at that time the worst terrorist attack in the history of the United States was a life-changing event for many of us. During the actual response, however, we were really too busy to think about what was happening, and we certainly weren't thinking about any lessons learned. It was only afterward that the importance of what, how, when, and who became apparent. It's my hope that this article can offer you some ideas and approaches to making sure your community is prepared if the worst happens.

First, let me say that I believe that planning is the key to success in everything we do. But it is absolutely critical in disaster preparedness. Planning allows you to anticipate, rather than react. It will help you identify what might happen, how you'll need to respond to it, and whom you will call on to make that response.

Planning for disasters allows you to build in funding to sustain emergency plans into the future. It improves organizational knowledge and capacity and encourages creative thinking and problem solving. Planning minimizes surprises in an emergency response and reduces your dependence on luck to succeed.

Think about this. How much effort would you put into your disaster plan if you knew lives would depend on it? Believe me, they will. The emergency planning process creates a culture of preparedness in your organization. There simply is no good excuse for not planning.

We found in OKC that decisions we made in the first few minutes and hours of the incident proved to have the greatest impact on the outcomes. This will, however, also be the most difficult time to make good decisions as the surroundings will be chaotic, information will be limited, and many resources may not yet be in place. This is where a plan with predetermined critical decisions and actions will be most useful.

Help will come, but it's at the very beginning when you'll have the chance to make the most positive difference, and as first responders you'll be on your own. In major incidents, there is never a second chance to get it right. I encourage local governments to plan for the first eight hours of a disaster. That's the timeframe in which you can make the most positive difference.

One of the things that has stuck with me over the years was how important communication was for us in OKC—not just the technical aspect (the phones, pagers, and radios), but the interpersonal kind. In a crisis, it's often not so much what we know, but how well we know each other that determines how successful we will be.

I believe that communication can be the fatal flaw in nearly all we do. It is even more important in a crisis. Practice communication, anticipate existing communication methods to fail, and have a backup. Plan as a team; train together. Extend your training to include cross-departmental groups and the people who will be helping you in mutual aid.

The more you learn about each other, the more effective your emergency operations plans will become—in both what you do every day and most certainly in an emergency response.

## The Processes

The next most important element is having a process to manage the incident. We are now required by federal law to use the Incident Command System (ICS) in our emergency and disaster plans and our response. ICS should be the organizational foundation component of your planning. One of my heroes is the former fire chief of OKC, Gary Marrs. As incident commander (IC), Chief Marrs was responsible for oversight of the entire response. What an overwhelming challenge!

But Chief Marrs, working cooperatively with Police Chief Sam Gonzales and others, used ICS to delegate operations, administrative support, logistics, planning, and other specific actions so he could maintain his focus on the big picture. He was the consummate leader throughout the event.

He held us together. Having one person in charge is critical to maintaining operational control of a large incident.

**Symbolic chairs represent bombing victims at the Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, memorial.**

Your plan should be geared to support the IC in accomplishing this. In OKC, ICS was a key tool in allowing Chief Marrs to do a great job as our IC.

ICS doesn't dictate tactics; it brings coordination, communication, and cooperation to the folks who will be managing a response. ICS is flexible and scalable and is absolutely the best system I've ever used to manage and direct responses to an incident or special event. I'd use it even if it wasn't the law. ICS helps create successful responses. It is a key management tool.

During the first few days of the response everyone wanted to help at the building. That was, however, the job of our search and rescue teams. It took several people in support to keep one searcher in the building and active around the clock. This impressed on me the importance of "doing your job" and sticking to the script. It's critical, and it can save lives.

The emergency operations plan (EOP) is an interesting document. It can contain the seeds for either your future success or your failure. Keeping your plan small and focused is important. You want to be able to initialize your response and management elements quickly, activate critical actions on the ground (including search and rescue, emergency medical, security, and evacuation), marshal resources, and make sure individual people are responsible for specific critical tasks.

You'll need to assure that you can continue to maintain normal critical services apart from the incident response. And you'll want to be able to track and assign resources and mutual aid.

Wherever you can, reduce critical tasks to checklists. Keep your EOP as small as possible because on the day of the disaster you won't have time to read a large book. The amount of effort you put into developing and maintaining the EOP correlates directly with how well it will work when you need it.

## The Protocols

In summary, managers need to remember that in a major incident flexibility equals success. We can't allow ourselves to lock into only one approach. The incident will change, and we must be able to change with it. Our plan should support initiative, clear away the barriers to operations, and set the protocols for making decisions.

I believe these are the critical keys to success:

- **Planning, planning, planning.** Critical steps are build, test, modify, and monitor. Fortune favors the prepared.
- **Communication.** Lack of communication is the fatal flaw internally and externally. Have a plan. Have a backup.
- **Problem solving.** Fix current problems among the staff. You can't respond effectively if you have issues with daily operations.
- **Checklists.** Develop checklists for critical actions, and assign specific people to them.
- **Management process.** Learn the incident command system. Then practice it.
- **Protection and support.** A key priority is to protect your responders and support staff. No one can do this without appropriate staff to assist.
- **First eight hours.** Plan well for this because this is the most critical decision-making period.
- **Collaboration.** Develop mutual aid agreements before you need them.
- **On task.** Do the job assigned to you. It takes many people in support to keep the responders going. We can't all be rescuers.
- **Focus and attitude.** Focus on positive action and progress, not the mistakes you will make.
- **Confidence.** When in doubt, do the right thing.

There is hardly a day that goes by that I don't think about my experience in OKC. I remember the terror, the pain, the frustration, and the grinding days when Oklahoma City staff members were doing our jobs. But most of all, I remember the people.

I remember the employees of OKC who successfully met and solved an unbelievable challenge, the heroes—both known and unknown—throughout the 17 days, and the residents who came together in a way I'd never witnessed before to make sure that this disaster didn't destroy our community but made it stronger than before.

Emergency preparedness is job number one for the public administrator. Don't fall into the trap of putting it on the back burner or thinking it will never happen in your community. It can, and it will. Managers must be prepared to respond to it. PM

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By David Stroud, Kimberly Miller, Stuart Schleien, and Charlsena Stone

# A "We Don't Exclude Anyone" Policy *Is Not Enough*

## INCLUSIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN PUBLIC RECREATION

In today's world of an ever-increasing number of wounded veterans, aging baby boomers, and children with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities, a significantly larger number of individuals with disabilities are approaching public recreation providers for services essential for a good quality of life. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates not only that these underserved residents have access to recreation agencies, but that they have opportunities to participate alongside everybody else in the community.

### TAKEAWAY

This article offers a definition of inclusive recreation service delivery, challenges the "organizational will" of public recreation agencies to provide more inclusive services, identifies best practices supporting inclusive services, and provides a self-evaluation tool for administrators to rate the agencies in their jurisdictions.

### What Is Inclusive Recreation Service Delivery?

Inclusive recreation service delivery is a service model based on the philosophy that programs and services should be available to all individuals equally, regardless of background, ability, or disability. The primary outcome is social inclusion where participants with and without disabilities participate together successfully, with or without supports, in their chosen activities and locations.

Inclusion requires that individuals with disabilities not only be welcomed to attend programs alongside their peers without disabilities, but also participate so that they gain benefits similar to benefits that are available to everyone else.

### Response to ADA in Public Recreation

It has been more than 20 years since the ADA was signed into law by President George H. W. Bush to ensure the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. The promise of the ADA was to enable all Americans to become fully participating members of society.

That promise is being realized slowly as barriers to education, employment, independent living, and recreation opportunities are falling and perceptions are changing. Substantial progress has been made, but barriers do remain and work still needs to be done.

The most notable progress to date has taken the form of increased physical accessibility. A large number of buildings, sidewalks, parks, and other public facilities are now architecturally accessible. Unfortunately, programmatic accessibility has been lagging. People with disabilities are now able to access their local recreation and fitness centers in a physical sense, but many programs remain inaccessible to them.

Many recreation agencies have demonstrated a somewhat naive response to ADA. When asked whether they

include individuals with disabilities in their programs, representatives reply, "We don't exclude anyone!" Such a minimalist answer does not exude a spirit of welcoming and inclusive opportunities for all.

Agencies that profess to not exclude anyone may go as far as enabling individuals with disabilities to attend their programs, but might not thoughtfully and systematically include them. For successful inclusion to occur, specific accommodations and adaptations are often necessary, although they are rarely provided even if the need exists.

In many cases, the "we don't exclude anyone" response is not a convoluted attempt to avoid responsibility for adhering to ADA, nor is it a distorted message designed to conceal outright discrimination. To the contrary, it is an example of a "barrier of omission"—that is, a failure to recognize the presence and needs of an underrepresented group.

In the face of unprecedented economic pressures, it is more essential than ever for public entities to remain fully committed to the ADA and full inclusion. Two decades of moving persons with disabilities out of second-class citizenship must not be lost.

## Best Practices in Inclusive Service Delivery

Although the inclusion of individuals with disabilities is a mandate that warrants attention at the programmatic level, it is accomplished effectively and sustainably only when an entire recreation agency—from top to bottom—supports it. Much still needs to be learned about how to facilitate inclusion, but what is known is that it requires the support of a comprehensive set of administrative practices. Also, agency administrators and managers who prioritize and sustain recreational initiatives need to be committed to the effort.

A recent extensive search for administrative-level approaches used in public recreation agencies across the United States led to the documentation of these practices that were almost always present in agencies with inclusive services:[1]

- **Administrative support:** establishing inclusion as part of the central mission of the agency and communicating this broadly as an agency priority.
- **Hiring practices:** designating an inclusion facilitator (for example, a certified therapeutic recreation specialist) with strong skills in bridge-building and communication; also hiring and preparing general recreation staff who endorse the inclusive culture of the agency.
- **Budgeting:** providing the necessary supports, accommodations, and capital improvements for increased physical access.
- **Marketing:** advertising inclusive services to a broad audience, including directly to individuals from underrepresented groups.
- **Evaluating:** setting up a protocol for evaluating programs, supports, and the entire inclusion process.

## How Does Your Recreation Service Measure Up?

Based on the practices identified in our nationwide search, we developed a self-evaluation tool to help administrators and managers conduct an assessment of their agency's use of best practices in support of inclusive service delivery. We encourage you to complete the self-rating scale (see Figure 1) to determine how your agency measures up.

Agencies should strive for a score of 50 points, indicating the full use of administrative best practices to support inclusive service delivery. A score of 40 points indicates the agency has moved beyond the "we don't exclude anyone" policy and is actively engaged in inclusive service delivery.

The first three items on the scale are relatively easy, but it is the final seven items that set apart the agencies that possess the organizational will to make inclusive service delivery a reality. These items suggest the agency has moved beyond the "talk" and is implementing practices that require careful thought and a genuine interest in reaching underrepresented groups.

So, how did your agency stack up on items 4 through 10? A score of fewer than 25 points on these seven items raises concern; fewer than 20 is a clear indicator that your agency lacks that organizational will to satisfy the mandates of the ADA and is not meeting the needs of your community's largest minority group.

## What Can Administrators Do?

Our research and field experiences have shown that inclusive services become prevalent throughout an agency only after administrators demonstrate their full

### 10 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE, INCLUSIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

1. Learn what the laws say about including people with disabilities, and incorporate inclusive service delivery into the agency's mission and goals.
2. Market programs to a broad range of community members.
3. Hire a staff member with expertise in accommodating people of varying abilities.
4. Prepare all agency staff to welcome and include people from underserved groups.
5. Be willing and prepared to change the way programs and services are provided.
6. Designate an adequate budget to provide necessary accommodations for participants when needed.
7. Communicate in an ongoing manner with family members of participants with disabilities.
8. Carry out continuous evaluation of inclusive services and the inclusion process.
9. Incorporate strategies to sustain inclusion efforts.
10. "Walk the walk!"

**Figure 1. Administrative Practices to Support Inclusive Recreation Services: A Self-Rating Scale.**

**Directions:** Use these ratings (Likert scale) to score your agency on each item:

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Uncertain 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

| PRACTICE | SCORE |
|---|---|
| 1. Our agency's mission statement is consistent with inclusive service delivery. | |
| 2. Our agency has goals that support inclusive service delivery. | |
| 3. Our agency's facilities are architecturally accessible. | |
| 4. Our agency's marketing materials state that individuals with disabilities are welcome to register and participate in all of our programs. | |
| 5. Our agency's budget includes funds to support and accommodate individuals with disabilities in inclusive settings. | |
| 6. Our agency employs a specific staff member responsible for inclusive service delivery. | |
| 7. Our agency trains recreation programming staff in disability awareness. | |
| 8. Our agency provides training to staff on best practices in inclusion and how to accommodate people with disabilities. | |
| 9. Our agency evaluates our inclusive services. | |
| 10. Our agency has strategies in place to ensure that inclusive service delivery will be part of long-term service delivery. | |
| **Total score:** | |

support. Because administrative policies drive an organization, it is important that they designate inclusion as a priority and communicate this philosophy and program direction throughout the agency's mission and strategic plan. Administrators need to speak about it with elected officials, staff, and community members and develop agencywide goals reflecting its importance.

Administrators must also create organizational will to support inclusion. This requires the investment of time and resources that enable the agency to move beyond "we don't exclude" to actively recruit, engage, support, and socially include people of varying abilities.

A few small, immediate, and visible victories and successes could go a long way toward building systemic and sustainable change in a community's inclusive recreation programming. Results are important; encouragement is rarely enough.

If your agency has the organizational will to begin and sustain inclusion, there are several early actions (and early victories) that could kick-start the process. And this begins with administration.

After you present inclusive service delivery as a high priority and integral part of your agency's mission and strategic plan, staff members will likely accept training to learn how to modify environments and programs to serve a broader range of participants. With empathy, understanding, and confidence, the agency can market its services to underrepresented groups. More individuals and families will connect with your agency and ask for access, and this will lead to additional staff training and support.

Although no inclusive program will run smoothly all of the time—there will be times when a participant's skill level doesn't match the activity or the necessary modifications are not available—even small successes will build levels of confidence among staff and participants. This is how success begins: with a will to listen to people who have not previously accessed your agency and then manage the agency to serve them. PM

**AGENCIES THAT PROFESS TO NOT EXCLUDE ANYONE MAY GO AS FAR AS ENABLING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ATTEND THEIR PROGRAMS BUT MIGHT NOT THOUGHTFULLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY INCLUDE THEM.**

1 S. J. Schleien, K. D. Miller, and M. Shea, "Search for Best Practices in Inclusive Recreation: Preliminary Findings." *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration 27, no. 1* (2009): 17–34.

The development and distribution of this article was partially supported by Cooperative Agreement No. H325K070330 funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education. The content and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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BY MARK RYCKMAN, ICMA-CM

# NARROWBANDING

## Complying with two FCC deadlines

Managers may not be aware of it yet, but another unfunded mandate is waiting just around the corner. Because of the increase in wireless communications, the nation's airwaves are becoming crowded. To better accommodate current needs and future projected telecommunications growth, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is taking steps to more efficiently allocate the limited airwaves (or spectrum) available. The changes include how land mobile radio (LMR) systems operate.

LMR systems use portable, mobile, hilltop base and repeater stations as well as stations connected to dispatch consoles for field radio communications. They operate on various channels, many of which are 25 kilohertz (kHz) wide, also known as wideband.

FCC is requiring LMR users in certain bandwidths to reduce their voice and data channel operations to 12.5 kHz.

### Important Dates

FCC's order requiring narrowbanding, which was adopted in December 2004, includes two important dates:

**January 1, 2011.** FCC will not license new wideband applications for radio systems operating in the 150–174 megahertz (MHz) or 421–512 MHz bands. FCC also has prohibited the manufacture and importation of any wideband equipment designed to operate in the 150–174 MHz and 421–512 MHz bands.

**January 1, 2013.** LMR licensees operating in the 150–174 MHz and 421–512 MHz bands must move to 12.5 kHz channels for voice and data transmissions.

### Implementation Plan

The deadline to convert to narrowband systems may appear distant, but in the world of local government procurement it might not be as far away as it seems. Managers are urged to review FCC radio licenses and determine whether any 25 kHz systems are operating in the affected bands. If a manager is having difficulty verifying which licenses exist, the radio communications system vendor, a qualified FCC licensing assistance service, or an FCC-certified frequency coordinator can be contacted for assistance.

When inventorying radios, make sure to include portable radios, mobile radios in vehicles, base stations, and repeaters. It is also important to identify any supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems that may be using 25 kHz radio systems.

SCADA systems are commonly found in wastewater treatment plants, water systems, electric facilities, and civil defense siren systems. It can be helpful to build a spreadsheet containing the make, model, and serial number of each radio, and it is extremely important that this information is copied exactly as it appears on the radio. Dropping a digit from a model number can make the difference between a need to replace a piece of equipment or merely retuning it for the correct frequency.

Next, craft a strategy for replacing and retuning radios. Ask staff members questions about how many radios are really needed and to whom they should be assigned. Does every vehicle and piece of equipment in a fleet need a radio? Who is assigned portable radios and why? It is common for systems to grow over the years without adequate planning. This is a time to size a system to meet an organization's needs.

Secure the necessary funding and follow required procurement processes. Start soon, as orders may become backlogged the closer it gets to January 1, 2013. Make sure the vendor has a firm understanding of the final time frame for conversion.

This will also need to be communicated clearly to employees and area agencies. Select one point person to respond to questions or address issues as they occur. Having a single point of contact will lessen the chance of miscommunication and misunderstanding.

Based on the final schedule, don't forget to apply to FCC to modify licenses to reflect the conversion from wideband to narrowband. Again, don't wait until the last minute to apply, as FCC may experience delays with the volume of license modifications that are requested nationwide.

BASED ON THE FINAL SCHEDULE, DON'T FORGET TO APPLY TO FCC TO MODIFY LICENSES TO REFLECT THE CONVERSION FROM WIDEBAND TO NARROWBAND.

### Compliance Is Required

FCC's narrowbanding mandate is not negotiable. All licensees operating in the 150–174 MHz and 421–512 MHz bands must comply. It is not anticipated that waivers or extensions will be granted. Failure to comply may result in the issuance of monetary fines and even the revocation of FCC licenses.

In addition, if a local government "narrowbands" before a neighboring one, users may experience interferences that hamper an agency's communications. Do not delay compliance.

For more information, visit FCC's webpage on narrowbanding at www.fcc.gov/pshs/public-safety-spectrum/narrowbanding.html. PM

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BY ANNA READ

# SUNSHOT SEEKS TO REDUCE SOLAR COST

## What communities can do to make solar cost competitive

The Department of Energy's (DOE) SunShot Initiative aims to make the cost of solar energy competitive with other forms of energy, including fossil fuels. DOE is working to reduce the cost of solar energy by more than 75 percent by 2020.

Reaching this level of cost competitiveness should result in large-scale adoption of solar technologies in the United States. To achieve this goal, SunShot is focused not only on technological advances that make solar technologies more efficient but also on nontechnical barriers, including permitting and installation costs. These soft costs can add significantly to the price of a solar energy system and discourage municipal, residential, and commercial property owners from installing solar.[1]

Solar energy can have a number of benefits for communities, and local governments are well positioned to help make solar technologies more accessible. Solar energy can help create jobs, stimulate investment in the local economy, promote energy independence, and address air and water quality concerns.

Local governments can play a key role in removing barriers to solar installations, including confusing permitting processes and interconnection standards, complicated inspection processes, lack of financing mechanisms, and lack of public awareness about solar.

**Streamline permitting processes.** Permitting costs, including the wide variation in local permitting processes, excessive permitting fees, and manual submittal of permitting documents, can add more than $2,500 to a residential solar installation while not improving safety.[2]

Creating a streamlined and consistent permitting process for solar installations can help reduce costs, as can online permitting. Local governments can simplify permitting processes and fee structures, make permitting information available to prospective solar energy system owners and contractors, and fast-track permits where appropriate.

San Jose, California, has streamlined its permitting process, and permits can be waived for installations meeting simple requirements regarding weight, concentrated loads, and height. These permitting changes, along with scheduling post-installation inspection appointments within a two-hour window, have helped reduce the costs of solar installations in San Jose to well below those of other large California cities.[3]

**Improve inspection processes.** Providing training for code officials responsible for enforcement related to solar installations can help address solar costs. Training can clarify technical elements of solar energy systems and make sure that systems are installed properly. It can also promote safety during installation and expedite inspection, saving money across the board.

**Improve interconnection policies and processes.** Although interconnection standards are often determined at the state level, local governments with municipal utilities can often influence interconnection standards. Adopting efficient interconnection standards that specify different levels of review for systems of different sizes and complexities, establishing transparent interconnection processes, eliminating requirements for liability insurance, and combining interconnection and permitting applications can all help reduce costs of installation.

Local governments can also work with investor-owned utilities to improve the interconnection process—something New York City's Solar America City team did. Together with ConEdison, the team examined the technical aspects of interconnection, focusing on maximum technical potential of deployment of photovoltaic (PV) systems. As a result, PV systems under 200 kilowatts are not required to undergo a comprehensive engineering review before connecting to the grid.[4] A report by the Network for New Energy Choices grades the 50 states on the solar-friendliness of their interconnection standards.[5]

**Support financing options.** Homes and businesses traditionally pay for electricity monthly. Even with the price of solar energy systems dropping rapidly, purchasing a system outright is a significant investment that many cannot afford.

Fortunately, many promising financing models have emerged. Local governments can work to ensure that state and local policies allow for third-party ownership of solar energy systems, which allows solar companies to offer leases or power purchase agreements that spread costs over time. Local governments can also set up property-assessed financing, community solar financing, or group purchasing programs that make solar more affordable.

**Install demonstration projects.** Demonstration projects increase awareness of solar energy. They can be installed on local government property or in other highly visible community spaces and can include an educational component.

Jackson, Wyoming, which has the largest solar installation in the state on its wastewater treatment plant, also has installed a 24 kilowatt demonstration project on a parking garage in the town's downtown. This demonstration shows the community the benefits of solar energy and energy efficiency.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

BY MIKE CONDUFF, ICMA-CM, AND FRANK BENEST, ICMA-CM

# 10 NEW RULES IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC MELTDOWN

This is a challenging new era for elected officials charged with governing in the midst of economic meltdown. Now more than ever it is important for the manager to support the elected governing body so it can address a whole new reality and govern effectively.

## A Diminished Capacity to Respond

Unlike previous pullbacks, it appears that local government will experience long-term fiscal stress, undercutting its ability to respond to the big issues of the day. This financial crisis is not the result of the business cycle but a result of long-term structural issues.

To make matters worse, employees are feeling fearful, pessimistic, and even victimized. In a culture of fear, creativity cannot flourish and thus local government cannot overcome its problems.

## 10 New Rules

This diminished capacity to respond poses a confounding dilemma for elected officials. Candidates usually run on platforms that include making new community improvements or providing new services. After being elected and convincing their colleagues to go along, these governing body members have been able to direct staff to use "slack resources" to respond to ever-increasing community demands.

With the economic meltdown, there are no slack resources for new projects. In fact, ongoing budget cutbacks, layoffs, and demoralized employees all threaten the ability of local government to perform traditional service functions.

On the basis of our work with public agencies, we have crafted 10 new rules for governing communities in the midst of meltdown.

***1. Identify the Core***

To allocate scarce resources, top management must first help governing boards identify core versus non-core service or business areas. What are the things that the community holds most dear?

The chief executive of a northern California county, for example, contacted city representatives in the county to identify core and non-core businesses with the intent of identifying possible functions that cities may wish to contract out to the county, thus helping both entities.

The two core functions that cities wished to keep in-house were land use planning (determining the physical character of the community and promoting economic vitality) and park programming (affecting the quality of life in a community).

If they don't decide at first on what is core, governing boards may protect public safety programs at all costs and potentially decimate library and recreation services, which the community could also see as vital to its well-being.

***2. Focus on a Few Priorities***

Once the core is clear, the chief executive must also help the governing board identify (with the help of the community) a few priorities (three to five at the most) and then relentlessly pursue those priorities with limited resources.

When new demands for local government action arise—as they most certainly will—the governing board can then insist that any new demand replace an existing obligation. Palo Alto, California, at one time identified 39 high-priority projects approved by the council. The list needed to be trimmed.

The council and the city manager together were able to identify and focus on five of the priorities. Banners were hung in the council chambers, one banner for each priority. When someone suggested a new priority, the mayor could simply ask which banner should be replaced.

***3. Accelerate Through Subtraction***

To aggressively pursue these few identified priorities with shrinking resources, the chief executive needs to engage the governing board in supporting the organization as it relentlessly subtracts. The chief executive, for example, can engage the organization and create a temporary "Office of Bureaucracy Busting" to help eliminate outdated or inefficient activities.

When we ask employees in safe environments how to save money or improve effectiveness, every hand goes up. Their ideas range from eliminating non-value-added, ritualistic activities to significantly reengineering and simplifying contracting processes.

To pursue a few priorities effectively or respond to new demands amid economic meltdown, an organization needs to "accelerate." An organization cannot accelerate without subtracting.

***4. Limit Requests for New Analysis and Reports***

While governing board members may resist a community group's demand to immediately respond to some problem with a new service, the board often directs staff to conduct an analysis or prepare a report. In good times, these kinds of governing board reactions to new demands may mollify constituents who make the service request.

In bad times, chief executives need to have a courageous conversation with elected officials so that they understand that board referrals to staff of nonpriority items simply divert scarce staff resources and undercut the ability of the local government to perform.

***5. Have the Courage to Say "No"***

Once a governing board identifies core

program areas and a few priorities, it must stay focused and help the organization stay the course. Elected officials must have the courage to say "no" when groups make new demands. Of course, the city or county manager must also model the courageous behavior and say "no" to new requests for action and resources.

***6. Avoid a Zero-Risk Environment***

Local governments are notoriously risk averse. In fact, in our economic meltdown, the media, community groups, and sometimes elected officials seize on any mistake and criticize committed staff by name. In this environment, most employees will hunker down and avoid any risks.

To overcome the resource challenges, governing boards must encourage innovation. Examples include self-service kiosks, selling computer support or other services to adjacent public agencies, or sharing SWAT or fire ladder truck services with other jurisdictions. To innovate, employees must be encouraged to experiment, test out ideas, and remedy problems and mistakes along the way.

Bryan, Texas, used to award a "grand faux pas" each year. The worst but well-intentioned mistake of the year won. Chief executives and department directors must protect creative and risk-taking employees from abuse, and encourage governing boards to do the same. Otherwise, no innovation will occur regardless of exhortations from the dais.

***7. Pursue Nongovernmental Solutions***

Local government can no longer be the center of all problem solving. As challenges arise, top management can propose nongovernmental solutions involving private, nonprofit, and community partners. Chief executives can encourage elected leaders to focus on their convener and facilitative roles as opposed to proposing new direct services.

***8. Free Up Monies for a Few Targeted Investments***

Especially in severe budget times, a local government must make a few strategic investments to position itself for the future. The manager must help the governing board "overcut" so that the local agency can invest in such areas as employee development, information technology, critical capital improvements, energy efficiencies, sustainability initiatives, and strategic partnerships.

***9. Provide Meaning and Emotional Support to Staff***

Again, elected officials cannot achieve their policy agenda without the commitment of creative staff. In these times, governing boards can no longer throw money at employees (and money is a poor motivator). As Daniel Pink has told us, "Meaning is the new money."

Consequently, elected officials as well as top managers should translate their requests to staff in terms of the meaning of the work. Elected leaders are key translators. When approving a new bike boulevard, for example, the governing board can explain how bike facilities will improve the community's quality of life. Further, elected officials and top management can help the organization survive the difficult times by showing concern for employees, providing encouragement, and recognizing employee efforts.

***10. Help Develop Talent and Rebuild Organizational Capacity***

Ironically, it is in times of great fiscal stress that local governments most severely face the "free exiter problem," meaning that organizational all-stars can freely exit and get a job—often for greater pay—elsewhere. For them to stay, they must be growing and stretching. In fact, learning is the new social glue that provides organizational stickiness.

To support employee development, chief executives must recommend to the governing body that it resist gutting the budget for developing talent. The good news is that these programs can be inexpensive. Cost-effective programs include talent exchanges with other agencies, internal leadership academies or educational webinars sponsored by a consortium of local governments, and interim or rotational assignments.

## Courageous Conversations

Certainly, following these 10 rules will not be easy for elected officials. Adhering to the new rules will require focus, discipline, and will. Perhaps more than anything, elected leaders must exhibit courage. In fact, courage has become the hallmark of effective governance.

Convening stakeholders, starting conversations, and engaging all groups in difficult decisions will become the core competencies of leadership in the midst of continuing disruption.

## Steps to Support the 10 New Rules

Here are some immediate steps that managers can take to partner with their governing boards and promote the 10 new rules:

- Discuss this article with your management team and customize how top management can support your governing board in times of economic meltdown.
- Distribute this article to the governing body and discuss the reactions of its members at a study session and identify how top management can support them.
- Develop your own 10 new rules for managing in times of meltdown and discuss the draft list with department directors, other managers, and the governing board. Ask elected officials, as well as other managers, for their input as you finalize the 10 new rules for the chief executive.
- Schedule discussions with the governing board regarding core businesses, priorities, and non-value-added areas to subtract prior to developing the annual budget.
- Congratulate your elected officials when they make tough choices. PM

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A version of this article originally appeared in the California League of Cities' *Western City* magazine.

BY KAREN THORESON AND CHASE CARLILE

# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: THE NEW APPROACH TO CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

What does engagement mean today?

Amid the increasing calls for local governments to expand citizen engagement, some communities have already answered. For many, however, the idea of engaging residents generates negative images or concern about the consequences. What does more resident engagement mean today? Does it mean encouraging hyper-activists who attend every meeting and speak at every hearing? Can government engage residents when many seem to be enraged over divisive public issues?

It is helpful to recognize what resident engagement does and does not entail. It can be residents getting educated on how local government works and volunteering to serve on boards. It can be small groups of residents talking and identifying what they value about the community. It can be neighbors pitching in to clean up their neighborhood.

It usually does not mean organizing citizens to put pressure on government or selling a solution; instead, it is the creation of shared ownership of community problems. Engagement is more than such simple exchanges as providing information, being transparent, inviting input, and surveying citizens. Likewise, providing services and good customer relations does not make residents partners in solving community problems. These activities provide the foundation for citizen involvement but should not be equated with engagement.

Engagement moves involvement to a higher level. It is a qualitatively different interaction that provides the opportunity for citizens and officials to listen to and learn from each other as they address issues or problems they feel are important. Some believe that anything governments do to relate to residents is engagement, but governments will be more effective if they carefully determine whether true engagement is occurring.

Local government can encourage and support engagement, it can be a facilitator of action by others, and it can be receptive to initiatives that come from residents, community organizations, and social entrepreneurs—individuals and groups that take it upon themselves to solve a community problem.

Both exchange and engagement can occur in the two broad areas of community governance: (1) how the community decides what goals to pursue and what policies to make and (2) how the community delivers services to residents and works to address ways to make the community better.

Engagement can be encouraged by sharing information, deliberating, organizing, and delivering services. One approach often leads to another.

## Expand Knowledge and Understanding

Expanded knowledge and shared understanding are fostered by, for example, citizen academies that serve multiple purposes: educate, develop skills, form bonds, and generate discussion on the future of the community.

Communities have organized small-group dialogues to develop expanded awareness and understanding. The study circle method supported by Everyday Democracy is one example. Portsmouth Listens in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, started with a focus on schools and now uses community meetings to discuss the city's master plan; thus, dialogue led to deliberation and direct action.

Generating shared information does not have to happen face-to-face. It can also be done electronically. Palo Alto, California, uses Open City Hall to share information with the community. Palo Alto posts agendas of council meetings on Open City Hall along with the information packets.

Community members are able to review the information and comment on proposals as well as react to other points of view presented by participants. The use of Open City Hall is not limited to formal meetings; local governments can use the site to share any proposal and receive comments from the community.

Social media sites also can be used to help get information to residents. Chandler, Arizona, uses social media to tell about upcoming events, changes in local laws, and other city information. Community members can post reactions or queries.

## Deliberating

Deliberating is an approach that focuses on making decisions by convening a group of individuals tasked with finding solutions to specific problems. These groups can be ad hoc or they can be formalized boards and commissions that interact regularly with government staff. It can be a communitywide project or an effort to solve a problem.

Salt Lake City, Utah, uses deliberation to address problems that cannot be solved without public and private support. Through Salt Lake Solutions, the city has been able to engage all levels of government, business and nonprofit

organizations, and individuals in the community to find solutions to complex problems in a systematic process.

First, Salt Lake Solutions identifies a project, which can be a problem or an opportunity that meets at least one community objective and benefits from public and private sector cooperation. Second, the mayor appoints a neutral community convener to lead the Salt Lake Solutions partners team, which includes community, government, businesses, and nonprofit organizations that are able to contribute the time and resources necessary.

Third, the partners team creates a workable solution to the project, and it takes on the responsibilities of leveraging the public and private resources needed and of developing a partnering agreement. Team members' commitments to the project and the project timeline are outlined, and each member of the team signs the agreement.[1]

In 2009, Salt Lake Solutions convened a partners team of 20 organizations to raise awareness and motivate individuals to improve the air quality in the Salt Lake Valley. The team included people from government, businesses, faith organizations, and educators.

The team in 2009 chose the challenge of reducing vehicle emissions during a six-week summer period. The website ClearTheAirChallenge.org allowed participants to log how they reduced emissions. Almost 3,500 participants eliminated 110,720 single-occupant vehicle trips, saved 1 million miles, and reduced more than 1.7 million pounds of polluting air emissions during that six weeks.[2] Deliberation and decision making led to quantitative results.

## Organizing

Organizing emphasizes residents acting on their own. Action can be organized through either ongoing neighborhood associations or ad hoc organizations. It can be challenging because the local government gives up some control that it retains when it makes use of information sharing and deliberating.

When groups take over a problem and craft a solution, it creates a sense of ownership in the solution and can often lead to better results. Local governments have used this approach for encouraging recycling and encouraging wellness.

Neighborhood watch programs are a long-standing example of organizing. In communities across the country, residents have formed groups to address the issue of crime and partner with the local law enforcement agency to receive training, identify needs, and develop strategies to combat crime.

These strategies can be as informal as each resident taking responsibility for watching for suspicious behavior and reporting it. Or the strategies can be more formal: in Baltimore, Maryland, residents developed the Northeast Citizens on Patrol (NECOP) program after the HARBEL[3] community organization approached the commander of the Northeast District Police in 1999 as nuisance and quality-of-life crimes increased in the area.

A strategy to address crime in the Northeast district of Baltimore was developed, and NECOP launched in January 2000. The community association received donations from the business community, including a car that is used for patrols, as well as money for radios, rooftop identification signs, and a communications tower.

The radios allow volunteers on patrol to have instant communication with the police department. During the past 10 years, the program has expanded geographically and increased from 200 to more than 600 volunteers.[4]

## Delivering Services

Local governments can assess which services can be provided by the community and then partner with residents, groups, and individual volunteers to deliver those services. Co-production of services through recycling is an example, and in both Salt Lake City and Baltimore residents got involved to meet community goals.



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**INNOVATION EDGE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25**

This method is effective because it allows residents to actively engage in the work of local government. Being responsible for such services as park cleanup helps create a sense of pride in the community, which could well translate into more active residents. This method, however, can take a lot of dedication on behalf of the individuals or community groups to be successful.

Despite this, Phoenix, Arizona, decided to employ this method of engagement when it launched its Blight Busters program. Blight Busters links volunteers with training and tools to help eliminate graffiti, report code violations, and conduct cleanup projects.

These trained volunteers help bring together residents of the neighborhood as well as help extend the reach of code inspectors, police officers, and other law enforcement officials.[5] Through this program, residents are actively engaged in their community, not just in government processes, and they are able to see how their involvement improves the community.

Phoenix and other local governments have also created an app for cell phones that facilitates taking pictures of graffiti, weeds, or other violations and sending the information with the picture directly to the Neighborhood Services Department. The city no longer needs to send an employee to the site to document the violation because the residents can provide that documentation and make the city aware of the problem quickly and easily.

## Here Is the Approach

Each local government cited in this article used a different approach to address a community problem; however, each locality combined similar elements:

- Committing to resident engagement. Each local government was committed to listening to citizens and to actively making decisions, solving problems, or taking action.
- Defining a problem or issue. Each local government had a specific, well-defined issue or problem that needed to be addressed.
- Choosing the right method of citizen engagement. Each local government chose a method that was appropriate for the issue it was addressing and that it felt would achieve the greatest citizen engagement.
- Allowing the process to develop. In several cases, the method of citizen engagement evolved beyond its original purpose.
- Recognizing that citizen engagement is broad and ongoing. Citizen engagement is a dimension that can be added to any aspect of local government to expand interaction with citizens and evolve and grow. It is a not a one-time or one-purpose event.

Local government is an essential and often a lead partner with residents in fostering authentic, meaningful, and effective residential engagement. It is important for local governments to encourage residents to think of themselves as engaged in the activities of governance and working together to help make their community better. PM

1 "Welcome to Salt Lake Solutions," Mayor's Office, Salt Lake City Corporation, 2008, www.slcgov.com/slsolutions.
2 "Salt Lake Solutions Project: Utah Clear the Air Challenge," Alliance for Innovation, 2010, http://transformgov.org/en/knowledge_network/documents/kn/document/301984/salt_lake_solutions_project_clear_the_air.
3 HARBEL Community Organization, www.harbel.org.
4 Northeast Citizens on Patrol (NECOP), www.necop.com.
5 Svara and Denhardt, eds., The Connected Community.

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**SOLAR COMMUNITIES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21**

For more about what communities can do, see the publications listed in the endnotes to this article, which also include the Internet addresses. Solar America Communities workshops will be available at the National Association of Regional Councils Annual Conference, June 13–15, San Diego, California; and ICMA's Annual Conference, September 18–21, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Solar America Communities is a U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) program. ICMA and ICLEI-USA Local Governments for Sustainability were competitively selected by DOE to conduct outreach to local governments across the United States. PM

1 "SunShot Initiative," U.S. Department of Energy, http://www1.eere.energy.gov/solar/sunshot/.
2 Sun Run, The Impact of Local Permitting on the Cost of Solar Power: How a Federal Effort to Simplify Processes can Make Solar Affordable for 50% of American Homes (January 2011), www.sunrunhome.com/permitting.
3 Ibid.; Department of Energy, Solar Powering Your Community: A Guide for Local Governments, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: DOE and Solar America Communities, January 2011), http://solaramericacommunities.energy.gov/pdfs/Solar-Powering-Your-Community-Guide-For-Local-Governments.pdf.
4 Department of Energy, Solar Powering Your Community.
5 James Rose et al., Freeing the Grid: Best Practices in State Net Metering Policies and Interconnection Procedures (New York: Network for New Energy Choices, Vote Solar Initiative, Interstate Renewable Energy Council, and North Carolina Solar Center, December 2010), www.newenergychoices.org/index.php?page=publications&sd=no.

Solar America Communities is a U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) program designed to increase the use and integration of solar energy in communities across the United States. ICMA and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA were competitively selected by DOE to conduct outreach to local governments across the United States, enabling them to replicate successful solar practices and quickly expand local adoption of solar energy. For more information, visit www.solaramericacommunities.energy.gov.

**ANNA READ**
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# $2.1 MILLION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLAYGROUND GRANTS AVAILABLE

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Measuring quality of life in a community involves a host of factors. One simple, often-overlooked component is rarely considered in the equation: play. In increasing numbers, local governments are developing unique local action plans to increase the quantity and quality of play—cost-effective concepts that are shared with other communities through the Playful City USA program from national nonprofit KaBOOM!

In 2010, 118 communities ranging in size of a few thousand to millions and embracing both the council-manager and strong mayor forms of government received Playful City USA recognition for their efforts on behalf of children.

Killeen, Texas, is working to establish a parkland dedication ordinance that will identify areas where playgrounds and green space are needed in the community and will assist in future planning. In Juneau, Alaska, the city's first-annual Play Day witnessed more than 2,000 participants who took part in the "Passport to Play," which encouraged citizens to visit a variety of play spaces across the city.

Newport, Rhode Island, is working alongside residents to renovate a playground adjacent to low-income housing. The city has initiated efforts to create joint-use agreements between private schools with playgrounds and the city and to significantly boost the number of play spaces for children by opening the playgrounds to the public after school hours.

These initiatives were highlighted by Playful City USA, a free recognition program honoring local governments committed to increasing play opportunities for children. The program is now offering 103 grants totaling $2.1 million from 2011 to 2013 for play-related projects.

More information about Playful City USA and an application can be found at www.kaboom.org/playfulcityusa. Applications for 2011 Playful City USA status and available grants are due June 1. The Playful City USA grants are part of Let's Play—a community partnership led by Dr Pepper Snapple Group to get kids active nationwide. PM

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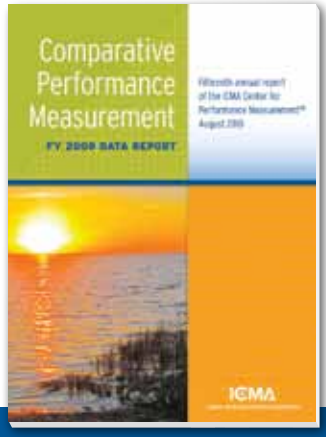


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BY JIM ZUMWALT, ICMA-CM

# INFORMED STAFF KEEP A MANAGER OUT OF TROUBLE

We all know that good local government staff members will try to protect each other and the manager. When I served as manager of Paducah, Kentucky, I was reminded that, in order to protect the manager, the staff has to know what the manager is doing.

Paducah invests lots of resources in economic development. It is trying to diversify its economy because in a few years it is going to lose a major employer. The Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant is the only remaining facility in the United States that concentrates uranium-235 isotopes in order to make nuclear power plant fuel rods. The plant is a huge operation with million-square-foot buildings and 1,200 well-paid employees. It is going to be closed because new plants using a centrifuge technology will be much less expensive to operate.

To evaluate Paducah's investment, a volunteer committee conducted a review of its economic development program. As I anticipated, the committee's report concluded that the city was investing too much in "buffalo hunting" (recruiting large industrial prospects) and too little in supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses.

One specific recommendation in the report was that the city should show its support for entrepreneurs and small businesses by sending a welcome letter to everyone who takes out a new business license. The recommendation was a great idea that I should have thought of myself years ago. I promised the committee that the city would implement it.

The finance director confirmed that he could easily provide a mail-merge address list from each month's file of new business license holders, and I drafted the welcome letter. As I was preparing to sign the letter, I realized that I should check with the staff members who actually deal with business license customers before sending out the first distribution.

I took the letter (see example on this page) to the revenue office and left a copy for the staff to review. Next morning, Revenue Officer Angela Copeland came to my office waving a copy of my letter and wearing a big grin. "Jim," she explained "this is a good letter, but you may want to have staff review each month's mailing list before you send it out.

"You know that we work hard to collect a business license fee from everyone who owes one. You may not realize that we issue licenses to individuals who work for businesses that hire their staff on personal service contracts. Some businesses operate this way to avoid the hassles of running a payroll or to avoid the cost of employee benefits. I suspect that the owners of some businesses use contracts to maintain plausible deniability. I suspect that the owners of some businesses—Regina's House of Dolls, for example—use contracts to maintain plausible deniability.

**I PROMISED THE COMMITTEE THAT THE CITY WOULD IMPLEMENT IT.**

"I doubt you want to risk having a new licensee displaying your letter and gushing to a television reporter about how proud she is that the city manager personally welcomed her to her new job as a club dancer and assured her he wanted to help her be successful." PM

*Example of Paducah's Welcome Letter in 2009*

**Dear Business Owner:**

The city's finance staff has told us that you have gotten a new city license for your business. We want to thank you for your investment in our community. Every business is important to us.

We take pride in Paducah and want to spread the word that it is a wonderful place to call home. Paducah has the unique advantages of being located on a river and next to an interstate. Plus, Paducah is a regional hub for shopping, dining, educational opportunities, and medical services. The city is striving to grow in population, in opportunities, and in recognition. Strides are being made through neighborhood revitalization, economic growth, and downtown redevelopment.

Should you need assistance with specific elements of your business start-up and are not sure where to turn, we urge you to contact our EntrePaducah Concierge. As the name suggests, the concierge helps new businesses find the resources and information needed during the critical start-up stage. EntrePaducah is located at Paducah's Commerce Center, as is our local Chamber of Commerce. Both may be reached at 270/443-1746.

Your business is another piece of the puzzle that makes Paducah a balanced and energized city. We wish you luck and much success.

Sincerely,
**William F. Paxton**, Mayor of Paducah and **James Zumwalt**, (then) Paducah City Manager

**JIM ZUMWALT,** ICMA-CM
City Manager
Manassas Park, Virginia
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