

DEFINING ICMA'S POLICY DIRECTION ON INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Adopted by ICMA Executive Board April, 2007

The board created the Committee on International Management Issues (CIMI) in September 1997 giving it a two-year authorization to assist the board in clarifying ICMA's approach and strategy for expanding the association's international dimension. In its 1999 final report, CIMI articulated a vision of how ICMA should position itself internationally as the "association of associations" and focus its efforts on strengthening affiliations and partnerships among national local government associations. CIMI also urged the board to provide leadership on the promotion of an international perspective throughout the organization.

The organization formally incorporated elements of CIMI's vision and perspective through three references in the 2000 Strategic Plan:

1. The **mission statement** of the organization: "To create excellence in local governance by developing and fostering professional local government management worldwide."
2. The **core belief** in the value of international association;
3. The **cross-cutting theme** of strengthening the international dimension of ICMA, in part by serving as the "association of associations."

Since 2000, these statements have served as the only guidelines for the organization relative to international activities and scope. Staff and a number of international members believe that these statements are too broad and provide insufficient policy direction at this time.

In this paper, staff present for board consideration and adoption recommended position statements (shown in **bold**) in six major areas to better define ICMA's international component. Implications for the recommendations from the International Committee's September 2006 report, which was included as a Management Report in the board's November meeting agenda, are referenced as appropriate.

Also included is a proposed definition of roles for the board, International Committee, and staff in pursuing ICMA's international goals.

Following the paper is a proposed framework for the board's discussion of these issues with suggested questions to stimulate discussion.

Organizational Definition and Mission

The 2000 Strategic Plan set forth the current definition of the organization and its mission. It referenced the importance of continuing to expand ICMA's international dimension to assist members in acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to be effective managers in a global environment. It also noted that while pursuing its mission ICMA can and should also play a key role in promoting professional local government and in fostering networks and exchange of information and leading practices among local governments worldwide.

Recommended position statement:

ICMA's vision is to be the premier local government leadership and management organization. Our mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and fostering professional local government management worldwide. ICMA provides technical and management assistance, training, and information resources in areas of performance measurement, ethics education and training, community and economic development, environmental management, technology, and other topics to its members and the broader local government community. ICMA is both a membership organization and a knowledge center for leading practices. Because of our size, scope, and resources relative to other local government associations, we are in the best position to take the lead in building an international knowledge base that is recognized worldwide.

The Role or Purpose of "International" in ICMA

The role of "international" in the organization has evolved and changed significantly since 1927 when the first Canadian managers joined as members and the organization's name was changed. A major milestone in the history of ICMA's international activities was in 1989, when the first donor-funded contract was received to conduct technical assistance outside the United States. There is a wide range of personal interpretation among members as to what the international component of the organization represents and should represent.

Recommended position statement:

There are three main aspects of ICMA's international role or purpose:

- **To foster professional local government management worldwide;**
- **To gain experience and provide for two-way learning and information exchange to increase ICMA and affiliates' organizational and member knowledge and experience in a global era (e.g., leading practice identification and dissemination); and**
- **To benefit members by providing a global context for local government management and the profession.**

ICMA's Goals as an International Membership Organization

Membership. In 1999, CIMI concluded that ICMA should not seek to be the primary membership association for managers outside the United States. Since 1990, international membership has ranged from around 300 to 500 annually, making up less than .5% of total ICMA members. At any given time, 20 to 30 different countries have been represented in the ranks of International Members, with the bulk coming from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where most members are local government managers. (International Members in many other countries are not "in service.")

The International Committee is currently proposing the exploration of a broad package of benefits and services for international members as well as a new membership category for

members of affiliate organizations who are not full dues paying individual members of ICMA. (See “Vehicles for ICMA’s Relationships with International Affiliates,” below.)

Recommended position statement:

Today, ICMA is predominantly a United States member organization that encourages international individual memberships and will continue to do so. We believe that international dues-paying membership will increase when our knowledge base has more international application and relevance. We aspire to further develop our knowledge base (leading practices, information exchange, technical assistance, products and services) so that it is relevant and valuable to local government managers/professionals worldwide, in both developing and developed countries.

Governance. As an international membership organization, ICMA recognizes the need to have varying points of view on the executive board. The constitution provides for the election of two international vice presidents from among corporate members in different countries outside the United States and two additional international vice presidents when the number of international corporate members exceeds 800 (currently 250). Tradition has been for the nominating committee to select one international vice president from the northern hemisphere (rotating between Canada and the United Kingdom) and one from the southern hemisphere (rotating between Australia and New Zealand).

The International Committee is currently proposing that the number of seats on the executive board be expanded to add a third international vice president based on the number of new members generated by the creation of the above mentioned international affiliate membership category.

Recommended position statement:

ICMA’s constitution currently provides for more than sufficient board representation relative to the number of international corporate members. However, staff recommend that the board encourages the nominating committee to seek to diversify representation by looking for candidates in all countries where there are in-service corporate members, not just the traditional four (i.e., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom). The International Committee recommendation to base board representation on something other than corporate membership raises a broader question of representation and governance for the association as a whole.

*Relationship between ICMA as a Membership Association and
an International Technical Assistance Provider*

Donor-funded Assistance. In the early years of ICMA’s donor-funded international technical assistance work, some members expressed concern that the work was not relevant to the association’s goals and objectives as a U.S. local government membership organization. These concerns dissipated with the revision of the mission in 2000 and as donor-funded vehicles became increasingly conducive to involving members and their staff in the work. Since 2000, almost 500 U.S. local government managers and officials, approximately 90 U.S. local

government entities, and ICMA staff from across the organization have participated in, contributed to, and benefited from ICMA's overseas work.

Recommended position statement:

ICMA's international donor-funded technical assistance work is an essential aspect of improving the profession worldwide. It is synergistic with the organization's mission in that it allows us to increase the organizational and member knowledge base and experience in a global era; and by supporting the advocacy aspects of the mission.

ICMA-funded Assistance. Concerns have been voiced by some members that ICMA should be doing capacity building work and advocacy in more countries irrespective of donor funding. For example, there has been a desire to continue capacity building in countries where USAID no longer funds work, such as that already undertaken in Mexico. The International Committee currently is recommending the development of a program to advocate professional local government management internationally based on a plan to be prepared by staff and including the identification of resources. The International Committee and staff make recommendations to the board on identifying new ICMA-funded activities in various countries and on how such activities could be funded. Obtaining funding from the private sector and foundations for this purpose will require the development of a long-term work program to develop relationships to execute this strategy.

Recommended position statement:

As part of the annual budget process, a focus and scope for ICMA's overseas work (including capacity building and advocacy for professional management) that is not donor funded will be reviewed and defined. Staff will take the lead in proposing priority recommendations for targeted countries, type of work, and funding. As an advisory body to the board, the International Committee shall provide input into the process. Consistent with the Executive Board's conversation of June 2006 on ICMA's role in public policy advocacy, development of public policy positions on international issues would follow similar operational parameters as the Governmental Affairs and Policy Committee (GAPC). There remain two outstanding issues regarding international policy positions: 1). How should international affiliates be engaged in the policy development process?; and 2). Who is the international audience for policy positions and what would be the most appropriate and effective delivery vehicle for advocating policy positions?

ICMA's Goals for Relationships with International Affiliate Organizations

The first international affiliate agreement (with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in the United Kingdom) was signed in 1987. There are currently affiliate agreements with nineteen organizations (ten in developed countries and nine in developing countries). To date, the affiliate agreements have resulted in relationships predominantly defined by periodic attendance of senior officials at each other's annual conferences, one-on-one exchanges under the auspices of the International Management Exchange Program, co-sponsorship of international leading practices symposia, and reprinting of articles from each other's publications.

The International Committee is currently proposing that affiliate agreements be viewed as mutually-beneficial and supportive networks and that ICMA not position itself as the umbrella professional association internationally (“association of associations” concept).

Recommended position statement:

As outlined in the current affiliate agreements, the mutual interest of ICMA and affiliates in establishing relationships with international affiliate organizations is to:

- **Collaborate in the exchange of leading practices and expansion of ICMA’s and affiliates’ organizational knowledge bases;**
- **Assist in expanding the personal knowledge bases of members in all affiliated organizations; and**
- **Join resources where appropriate to be stronger in fostering professional local government management.**

Vehicles for ICMA’s Relationships with International Affiliates

The current vehicle for ICMA’s international affiliate relationships consists of the signed organizational agreements described above. Minimal staff support focuses on maintaining communication, managing the International Management Exchange Program, and contributing to the arrangement of international leading practices symposia.

The International Committee is currently proposing that ICMA work more closely with the affiliates through the establishment of detailed annual work plans and increased staffing related to better implementing the substance of the agreements and maintain ongoing communication. In the absence of increased staffing, committee members themselves have served as direct organizational liaisons, which has resulted in increased individual member communication but has not supported institutional knowledge exchange and communication. The committee currently proposes setting aside at least \$75,000 annually to fund staffing and other expenses related to supporting the development and execution of work plans.

The International Committee is also proposing establishment of an affiliate membership category (no cost and limited benefits such as access to Web-based information) for members of affiliates who are not dues-paying members of ICMA.

Recommended position statement:

The relationship between ICMA and its international affiliates is based on the affiliation agreements that are signed with each organization. ICMA’s executive director will assign staff liaisons (7 to 10 based on 19 current agreements) to ensure ongoing communication and institutional knowledge exchange with designated staff in each of the affiliate organizations. ICMA’s connection with members of affiliates will be primarily through the affiliate organizations and staff-to-staff connections which will 1). provide substance to the work program with affiliates, and 2). increase opportunities to generate interest in becoming direct members.

*Roles of the Executive Board, International Committee, and Staff
Relative to the International Component of ICMA*

Recommended position statement:

The Executive Board's role is to establish policy direction and set priorities for all aspects of the international component of ICMA, including but not limited to:

- **funded and un-funded international capacity building and advocacy,**
- **relationships with affiliates and other international stakeholders,**
- **membership and governance issues of the organization,**
- **a knowledge base that is internationally relevant, and**
- **definition and description of the International Committee's annual charge.**

The International Committee's role is to be an advisory body to the board. It will carry out an annual charge as defined and described by the board. In addition, the committee will communicate the value of having an international perspective to other members of the association and will annually conduct a joint meeting with one of ICMA's international affiliates focusing on professional exchange and contribution to the international knowledge base.

Staff's role is to advise the board and administer programs related to all aspects of the international component of ICMA, including but not limited to:

- **funded and un-funded international capacity building and advocacy,**
- **relationships with affiliates and other international stakeholders,**
- **membership and governance issues of the organization,**
- **a knowledge base that is internationally relevant, and**
- **staff the International Committee.**

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Framing Questions for Discussion of Staff Recommendations

Question 1: What is ICMA?

ICMA's vision is to be the premier local government leadership and management organization. Our mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and fostering professional local government management worldwide. ICMA provides technical and management assistance, training, and information resources in areas of performance measurement, ethics education and training, community and economic development, environmental management, technology, and other topics to its members and the broader local government community. ICMA is both a membership organization and a knowledge center for leading practices. Because of our size, scope and resources relative to other local government associations, we are in the best position to take the lead in building an international knowledge base that is recognized worldwide.

Question 2: What is the role or purpose of "international" in ICMA?

There are three main aspects of ICMA's international role or purpose:

- To foster professional local government management worldwide;
- To gain experience and provide for two-way learning and information exchange to increase ICMA and affiliates' organizational and member knowledge and experience in a global era (e.g., leading practice identification and dissemination); and
- To benefit members by providing a global context for local government management and the profession.

Question 3: What does ICMA want to be as an international membership organization (i.e., Full dues paying individual memberships from non-US managers)?

Membership. Today, ICMA is predominantly a United States member organization that encourages international individual memberships and will continue to do so. We believe that international dues-paying membership will increase when our knowledge base has more international application and relevance. We aspire to further develop our knowledge base (leading practices, information exchange, technical assistance, products and services) so that it is relevant and valuable to local government managers/professionals worldwide, in both developing and developed countries.

Governance. ICMA's constitution currently provides for more than sufficient board representation relative to the number of international corporate members. However, staff recommend that the board encourages the nominating committee to seek to diversify representation by looking for candidates in all countries where there are in-service corporate members, not just the traditional four (i.e., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom). The International Committee recommendation to base board

representation on something other than corporate membership raises a broader question of representation and governance for the association as a whole.

Question 4: What is the relationship between ICMA as a membership association and as an international technical assistance provider?

Donor-funded Assistance. ICMA's international donor-funded technical assistance work is an essential aspect of improving the profession worldwide. It is synergistic with the organization's mission in that it allows us to increase the organizational and member knowledge base and experience in a global era; and by supporting the advocacy aspects of the mission.

ICMA-funded Assistance. As part of the annual budget process, a focus and scope for ICMA's overseas work (including capacity building and advocacy for professional management) that is not donor funded will be reviewed and defined. Staff will take the lead in proposing priority recommendations for targeted countries, type of work, and funding. As an advisory body to the board, the International Committee shall provide input into the process. Consistent with the Executive Board's conversation of June 2006 on ICMA's role in public policy advocacy, development of public policy positions on international issues would follow similar operational parameters as the Governmental Affairs and Policy Committee (GAPC). There remain two outstanding issues regarding international policy positions: 1). How should international affiliates be engaged in the policy development process?; and 2). Who is the international audience for policy positions and what would be the most appropriate and effective delivery vehicle for advocating policy positions?

Question 5: What does ICMA want from relationships with international affiliate organizations?

As outlined in the current affiliate agreements, the mutual interest of ICMA and affiliates interest in establishing relationships with international affiliate organizations is to:

- Collaborate in the exchange of leading practices and expansion ICMA's and affiliates' organizational knowledge bases;
- Assist in expanding the personal knowledge bases of members in all affiliated organizations; and
- Join resources (where appropriate) to be stronger in fostering professional local government management.

Question 6: What is the vehicle for the relationship between ICMA and the affiliates?

The relationship between ICMA and its international affiliates is based on the affiliation agreements that are signed with each organization. ICMA's executive director will assign staff liaisons (7 to 10 based on 19 current agreements) to ensure ongoing communication and institutional knowledge exchange with designated staff in each of the affiliate

organizations. ICMA's connection with members of affiliates will be primarily through the affiliate organizations and staff-to-staff connections which will 1). provide substance to the work program with affiliates, and 2). increase opportunities to generate interest in becoming direct members.

Question 7: What are the roles of the board, International Committee, and staff relative to the international component of ICMA?

The Executive Board's role is to establish policy direction and set priorities for all aspects of the international component of ICMA, including but not limited to:

- funded and un-funded international capacity building and advocacy,
- relationships with affiliates and other international stakeholders,
- membership and governance issues of the organization,
- a knowledge base that is internationally relevant, and
- definition and description of the International Committee's annual charge.

The International Committee's role is to be an advisory body to the board. It will carry out an annual charge as defined and described by the board. In addition, the committee will communicate the value of having an international perspective to other members of the association and will annually conduct a joint meeting with one of ICMA's international affiliates focusing on professional exchange and contribution to the international knowledge base.

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- membership and governance issues of the organization,
- a knowledge base that is internationally relevant, and
- staff the International Committee.