

PM MAGAZINE

Current Issue | About | Articles | PM+ Online Extra | Archives | Advertise | Professional Services Directory | Blog | Contact Us

ICMA Publications / PM Magazine / Archives

AUGUST 2007 · VOLUME 89 · NUMBER 7



Local Government Excellence Deserves a Prestigious Award

Local governments often struggle to define a single best approach for managing diverse operations, and even when they do pick one, they frequently have trouble sticking with it. As a result, managers often hear "Not another initiative!" or "Our employees don't understand our strategic plan," or "What's most important around here?" or "How do these measures link with our results?"

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program is a model for organizational effectiveness that has answered these and many other organizational questions for some 20 years. Private companies, health care, and educational systems have all benefited from the adoption of this dynamic model of organizational effectiveness. Beginning in 2007, nonprofits, including local governments, are eligible to participate in this program of quality and excellence.

James Lynn, Shorewood, Minnesota, and Craig Rapp, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

READ ARTICLE




IT Symposium

Solutions for Code Officials

Oct 3, 2007 Reno, Nevada

Register



Costs of Compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Standards*

Is GAAP accounting still our best method of reporting financial information?

Justin Marlowe, Lawrence, Kansas.

READ ARTICLE



Ethics

- Helping the Council with an Unpopular Issue
- Invitation to the New Governor's Inaugural Ball
- The Second Recall Campaign

Innovation Economy Comes to Eight Towns: The GCT Process and the Triple Bottom Line*

Eight local governments have seriously changed the impact of their community actions on the local economy and environment.

Ann Ruzow Holland, Willsboro, New York.

READ ARTICLE

On Retirement

Vantagepoint Public Employee Memorial Scholarship Recipients Honored

Commentary on ICMA's Strategic Plan*

Renewing the Profession Through "Next Phase" Managers

Profile

Bernard Lynch

Performance Matters

Measuring Performance in Local Government in Ireland—Our Experience So Far



PM Sixth Annual Pool Issue

The December 2007 issue of PM magazine will continue the special section on swimming pools that are owned and operated by local governments.

If you serve in a community that provides a public pool for its citizens and your community pool has not already been featured in the magazine—or if the pool has been updated since it was featured—and if the pool is distinctive in style, structure, operation, location, cost, or other management aspect, share this information in PM.

Send a 250- to 500-word description of why your pool is distinctive to PM Editor, ICMA, 777 N. Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201; e-mail is preferred, at bpayne@icma.org. Electronic photo files in high-resolution PDF format are welcome. The deadline for submitting article copy is September 14, 2007.

www.icmarc.org

Building Retirement Security



1-800-326-7272

Effective Supervisory Practices

ICMA PERFORMANCE MATTERS



FREE Monthly e-news on performance strategies for local government

SHOW ME



*Premium content available only to ICMA members.
Learn about the benefits of joining ICMA.

ICMA

About
Membership
Ethics
Priorities
Partners
Career Network
News
Events

UNIVERSITY

About
Annual Conference
Professional Development
Credentialing
Leadership Development

PUBLICATIONS

Print
Digital
PM Magazine
Blog

PROGRAM CENTERS

About
Sustainable Communities
Performance Analytics
Management Strategies

INTERNATIONAL

About
Projects
Services
Where We Work
CityLinks
Resources
News

ICMA HOME

Contact Us
Sign up for E-Newsletter
Join Now
Make a Gift



INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002-4201 800-745-8780/202-962-3680 fax 202-962-3500



PM MAGAZINE

COVER STORY

Local Government Excellence Deserves a Prestigious Award

by James Lynn and Craig Rapp

Local governments often struggle to define a single best approach for managing diverse operations, and even when they do pick one, they frequently have trouble sticking with it. As a result, managers often hear “Not another initiative!” or “Our employees don’t understand our strategic plan,” or “What’s most important around here?” or “How do these measures link with our results?”

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program is a model for organizational effectiveness that has answered these and many other organizational questions for some 20 years. Private companies, health care, and educational systems have all benefited from the adoption of this dynamic model of organizational effectiveness. Beginning in 2007, nonprofits, including local governments, are eligible to participate in this program of quality and excellence.

What Is the Baldrige Program?

The national quality award was created by Public Law 100–107 in August 1987. Established at a time when great concerns existed about U.S. competitiveness abroad, the program sought to raise awareness about the importance of quality and organizational performance. At the time, many American businesses either did not believe quality mattered or did not know where to begin. The Baldrige award was envisioned as a standard of excellence that would help U.S. companies achieve world-class quality.

The award is named for Malcolm Baldrige, who served as the U.S. secretary of commerce from 1981 until his tragic death in a rodeo accident in 1987. His commitment to managerial excellence contributed to long-term improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of government.

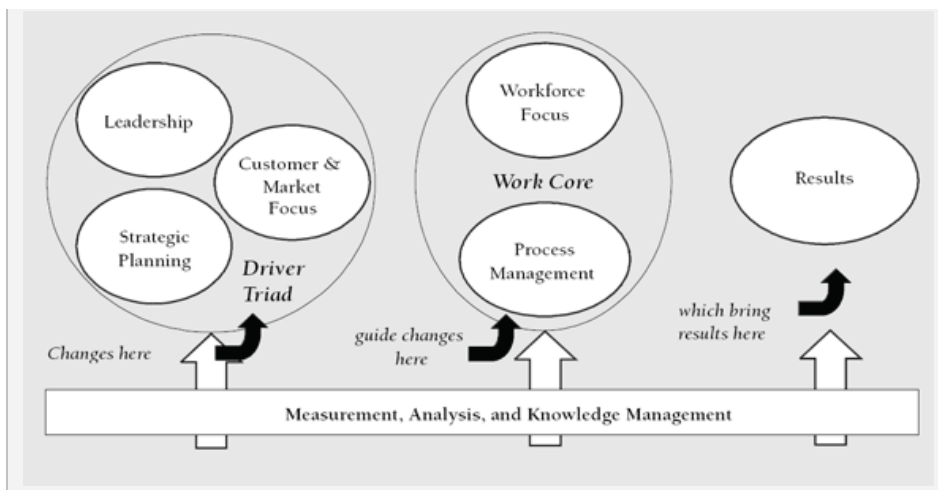
This award is not given for specific products or services but for demonstrated performance. Awards can be given in five categories: manufacturing, service, small business, education, and health care. Starting in 2007, nonprofit organizations, including charities and government agencies, can also apply for the award.

The application process is rigorous and thorough. Applicants submit up to 50 pages of details showing processes, improvements, and results in the seven areas of leadership, customers and markets, workforce focus, measurement, process management, strategic planning, and results. Each applicant receives more than 400 hours of review by an independent board of business, education, and health care experts, as well as a detailed report citing strengths and opportunities for improvement. Since 1988, 71 awards have been made.

The purposes of the award are to promote quality awareness, to recognize quality achievements of U.S. companies, and to publicize and share successful quality strategies. The criteria are designed to help organizations use an aligned approach to organizational performance management that delivers ever-improving value to customers, contributes to market success, improves overall organizational effectiveness and capabilities, and provides organizational and personal learning.

A significant number of organizations use the seven Baldrige criteria to perform self-assessments and drive continuous improvement efforts although they never apply for the award. This occurs because the Baldrige criteria are not just another performance improvement initiative; instead, they are a comprehensive road map for managing an enterprise. Figure 1 shows the seven criteria and how they interrelate.

Figure 1. Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence



The first three criteria—leadership, strategic planning, and customer and market focus—drive the model. Measures provide the scorecard. Workforce focus and process management make up the two work core criteria, all yielding results, which is the seventh criterion.

Organizations that commit to a Baldrige process thrive and prosper. Numerous studies of past award winners over extended periods of time have verified that Baldrige companies consistently yield improved business results. They become quality organizations that customers return to and where employees stay. By adherence to the model, Baldrige organizations deliver high quality and get real results.

You don't have to be large or wealthy to get these results. Delivering quality with limited resources is possible by systematically following the Baldrige approach. A program can be started with a minimal but consistent commitment. In a small organization, the management team typically chooses seven people to champion the seven criteria, and they meet monthly to learn how the criteria interrelate to achieve results.

Larger organizations, while difficult to generalize, often form teams around each of the criteria so that perhaps 40 to 60 staff members get involved and are trained on the criteria and pursue the Baldrige model. For the most part, size and budget are less important than commitment and follow-through.

BALDRIGE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT – ISN'T THIS A PRIVATE SECTOR PROGRAM?

Although the Baldrige program began as a way for American business to compete more effectively around the world, the framework was developed to promote quality and excellence, not simply to drive profits. The seven criteria form a set of values and core concepts that any organization—public or private—can use to its advantage.

Public school systems, colleges, health care organizations, and numerous service businesses have won Baldrige awards. There is no reason to believe that cities and counties would not benefit from the framework and the rigor associated with the process. In fact, it is probably more accurate to say that local government has a lot of catching up to do if it wishes to be compared with the best Baldrige organizations, regardless of sector.

Baldrige for government can work because the seven criteria are built on a set of interrelated core concepts and values that promote organizational excellence. Here are brief descriptions of the core values and concepts that underpin the Baldrige model.

Visionary leadership. The management team should serve as role models through ethical behavior and personal involvement in coaching and developing future leaders. Both strategy and customer/citizen goals need to be aligned. Commitment and initiative are built throughout the organization.

Customer-driven excellence. Customer- or citizen-driven excellence is a strategic concept. It is devoted to obtaining and retaining citizen support as well as maximizing competitive position. It is critical to understand and develop citizen-focused outcomes.

Organizational and personal learning. Learning results in a more satisfied and versatile employees who stay with the organization. Bright, innovative employees provide a distinct advantage in meeting the needs of the community.

Valuing employees and partners. An organization's success depends increasingly on the diverse backgrounds, knowledge, skills, creativity, and motivation of all its employees and partners, including both paid staff and volunteers.

Agility. A capacity for rapid change and flexibility is a key to success. Organizations face ever-shorter cycles for introducing new or improved programs and services as well for meeting expectations to deliver them more rapidly.

Focus on the future. Creating a sustainable organization requires understanding the short- and long-term factors that affect the organization and its environment. Developing employees and partners along with creating opportunities for innovation are key concerns.

Managing for innovation. Making meaningful change improves your services, programs, processes, and operations to create new value for the organization's stakeholders. Innovation builds on the accumulated knowledge of your organization and staff.

Management by fact. An effective administrative management system depends on the measurement and analysis of performance. If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. Selecting key performance measures and indicators is critical.

Social responsibility. An organization's leaders should stress responsibilities to the public, ethical behavior, and the need to foster improved communities. Organizations should not only meet regulatory requirements, but treat those requirements as opportunities for improvement beyond mere compliance.

Focus on results and creating value. An organization's performance measures need to focus on key results. Results should be used to create and balance value for your key stakeholders—customers, staff, the community, vendors, partners, and the general public.

Systems perspective. The Baldrige criteria provide a systems perspective for managing your organization and its key processes to achieve results in the form of performance excellence. The seven Baldrige categories and the core values form the building blocks and the integrating mechanism for the system. Successful management of overall performance requires organization-specific synthesis, alignment, and integration.

BALDRIGE AND ICMA

As the premier leadership organization for local government worldwide, ICMA has a unique responsibility to identify, evaluate, and promote good management concepts on behalf of its members and their organizations. The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program provides compelling evidence that it is a solid framework for organizational excellence.

Many leading-edge local governments across the United States are beginning to work with the Baldrige program. Two of the early success stories are highlighted in this article. ICMA has worked diligently over the years to identify best practices in local government management. An example of this is the 18 core content areas for effective management. These practice areas are used by managers to guide their personal development plans and organizational strategies and are the basis of ICMA's credentialed managers program.

Because ICMA members have both a personal and organizational stake in carrying out the 18 core content areas, Figure 2 links the seven Baldrige criteria with the 18 practice areas identified by ICMA and shows the relationships between the seven Baldrige criteria and the 18 ICMA practice areas that relate to these criteria. Note that some practice areas deal with more than one criterion. The 18 core areas can be found at icma.org (search under "ICMA University" and click on "management practices").

Figure 2. Links Between the Baldrige Criteria and ICMA Core Practice Areas

Managers use 18 core content or practice areas to guide their personal development plans, and these are the basis of ICMA's credentialed managers program. Here are the relationships between the seven Baldrige criteria and the 18 ICMA practice areas (practice areas are shown in green, used here only for effect). The core areas can be found at icma.org (search under "ICMA University" and click on "management practices").

1. Leadership

1. Staff effectiveness
2. Policy facilitation
6. Initiating, risk taking, vision, creativity, and innovation
8. Democratic advocacy and citizen participation
9. Diversity

2. Strategic planning

13. Strategic planning

3. Customer and market focus

4. Citizen service
8. Democratic advocacy and citizen participation
9. Diversity

4. Measurement, analysis, and knowledge management

5. Performance measurement/management and quality assurance
7. Technology literacy

5. Workforce focus

9. Diversity
12. Human resources management

6. Process management

3. Functional and operational expertise and planning
5. Performance measurement/management and quality assurance

7. Results

10. Budgeting
11. Financial analysis

Five Reasons to Choose Baldrige as a Performance Management Framework

Why should a city or county consider the Baldrige model when evaluating systems for managing its enterprise?

Consider these reasons:

- 1. It's nonprescriptive.** The criteria for performance excellence provides a framework for performance without specifying the methodology. If you are using the Balanced Scorecard, or doing Six Sigma or Lean Thinking, great! Baldrige assessments are concerned only with how effectively you are using and deploying them. The Baldrige model does not prescribe a preferred method for achieving performance on any criterion.
- 2. It's a comprehensive system.** The seven criteria cover every aspect of an effective management system: leadership, strategy, customers/citizens, measures, employees, processes, and results. Built around cycles of learning, the criteria are an integrated set of basic values, requirements, and processes that form a de facto definition of performance excellence.
- 3. It's about performance, not techniques.** The criteria focus on common requirements rather than procedures, tools, or techniques. An organization must show through facts and data that it has a world-class management system in place and that it is continually looking for ways to improve.
- 4. You'll uncover opportunities and build consensus.** A Baldrige process is not a test against a standard; it reveals strengths and opportunities, yielding a program for improvement. By establishing a shared view of the current reality, the assessment process also creates a consensus regarding what needs to be done to improve. Once identified, the organization can focus on what is most important to success.
- 5. It's the best practice.** The seven criteria are the leading edge of validated management practices. This model is not an academic theory about what might work in an organization. The Malcolm Baldrige award criteria have been tested for 20 years, and thousands of organizations have benefited from applying the criteria to their enterprise.

Coral Springs, Florida, in National Baldrige Spotlight

At the forefront of local governments who are using the Baldrige model to pursue organizational excellence is the city of Coral Springs, Florida. For more than 14 years, Coral Springs has been focused on quality improvements, as well as learning about and using the Baldrige model as a way to improve its effectiveness.

Already a two-time winner of Florida's Sterling Award (the state's equivalent of the Baldrige award), Coral Springs has now achieved national notoriety as one of only two applicants in the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award nonprofit pilot program to receive a site visit. In October 2006, a team of examiners from the Baldrige program analyzed the city's processes and how they compare with the criteria for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

In 2006, the first year that nonprofit organizations and governments were allowed to submit applications, Coral Springs was one of 10 eligible applicants. Because this is a pilot project for Baldrige, no awards were made for the 2006 applicants.

Coral Springs, however, is no stranger to the intense scrutiny of the Baldrige examination process. As part of the Sterling Award process in Florida, the city had to submit a 50-page application that was scored against the seven Baldrige categories. This was followed by two rounds of site visits from a team of six to eight examiners. The examiners evaluated, probed, interviewed, and thoroughly examined the city's processes. Upon completion, they submitted a detailed written feedback report highlighting key strengths and opportunities for improvement for future organizational planning.

City staff believe that they benefited significantly from their experiences with the Sterling process and that many of their processes—from performance measurement to strategic planning—have improved. As part of its commitment to high-quality measurement, Coral Springs participates in ICMA's Center for Performance Measurement.

One of the most important lessons for Coral Springs has been that simpler has been better. Staff members have dramatically streamlined the performance measurement process, tracking fewer but higher-quality indicators. The strategic plan and business plan are short, easy-to-read documents. Even the budget has become lighter and more user friendly.

Feedback, continuous improvement, and Baldrige site visits have given the city objective insights into how well it is performing, and they have enabled the staff to further improve the city's processes. "We use these programs to constantly sharpen our skills in customer service, process management, and data analysis," said City Manager Michael Levinson. In May, the city applied for the 2007 National Baldrige Award. Nonprofits are no longer a pilot program and are now eligible for the award.

"We're proving that local government can compete with the private sector in achieving high customer satisfaction by delivering quality services at low cost," said Mayor Scott Brook.

Source: "Our Quality Initiative," from the Coral Springs, Florida, Web site at www.coralsprings.org.

Using the Baldrige Process to Enhance County Management

Dakota County, Minnesota, has long had a reputation for local government innovation and effectiveness, and it has the awards to prove it. But at the time of the county's 2006 leadership retreat, little did County Administrator Brandt Richardson realize what effect a presentation would have on the county's reputation for excellence.

At the retreat, James Lynn, the retreat facilitator and coauthor of this article, led the county's executive team through an orientation on the Baldrige model for quality. The purpose of the overview was to determine whether this model might be a way for Dakota County to take its organization "to the next level." This presentation made an impression on Richardson, and within months the county began its Baldrige journey.

In Minnesota, as in many states, a state award program recognizes organizations at several achievement levels, based on how they rate against Baldrige management criteria. The program is run by the Minnesota Council for Quality, one of the leading state quality programs in the country.

To prepare for the Baldrige journey, Dakota County opted for a process known as the Baldrige Express. Under this approach, the organization submits to a rigorous review that covers all seven areas of Baldrige: leadership; strategic planning; customer focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; workforce focus; process management, and results.

Baldrige Express in the county had several components, including detailed feedback from a survey of 225 managers and employees; 165 people completed the survey in December 2006. That survey resulted in 450 pages of feedback, including 300 pages of open-ended comments.

A three-day visit in April 2007 by six Baldrige examiners from the Minnesota Council for Quality was the next step in the evaluation process. The purpose was to verify the results of the survey and evaluate the county's management systems. During the visit, examiners met with more than 140 employees at 10 county facilities, and they reviewed more than 150 pieces of documentation. They attended scheduled meetings and, in addition, held a few impromptu meetings and informal walk-arounds.

Upon completion, the examiners presented their findings to the county's senior management team and other key leaders. The report noted strengths like leadership, strategic development and deployment, customer focus, organizational focus, and process improvement.

Early suggestions for improvement to keep the county on a path of excellence included the need for more systematic, fact-based evaluation and improvements; more consistent and systematic methods for determining customer satisfaction; and the need to more broadly apply and deploy some key processes, like the balanced scorecard, so that information collected could be used more effectively to support decision making.

For its efforts, Dakota County was honored as one of eight recipients of the 2006 Minnesota Quality Award; it was the first county ever to receive the award in Minnesota. To celebrate the recognition, Richardson met with small groups of employees and handed out balloons on Friday, May 18. He visited the county's three service centers, Galaxie Library, the sheriff's office, the Empire transportation shop, and one of the county's road crews. The county staff chose balloons because the helium put them on a parallel path with the county—which is up!

At the award ceremony, Dakota County Board Chair Mike Turner summarized their achievement: ". . . Dakota County (or any governmental agency) does not have a choice of who our customers are, what services they need, and when they need them. But we do have a choice of how we provide those services. Dakota County, which has used a balanced scorecard for years and has designed other management systems that would be the envy of many businesses, is convinced that it can operate an efficient, effective, responsive government that achieves its vision of being a premier place in which to live and work."

County Administrator Richardson will now move forward, talking to employees to collect ideas, share information, and encourage them to take pride in their accomplishments. He will be working with others to review the nearly 400-page report, clarify comments, and determine the county's next steps toward Baldrige excellence.

James Lynn, Ed.D., LP, is a consulting psychologist, Lynn & Associates, Shorewood, Minnesota (lynnconst@aol.com). Dr. Lynn has been a Baldrige examiner for more than 12 years. Craig Rapp is director of local government solutions, ICMA, Minneapolis, Minnesota (craig.rapp@icma.org), and he is a former city manager. He directs ICMA's consulting services, and, collaborating with Dr. Lynn, developed ICMA's "Lean Thinking for Government" training course.

For more information on the Baldrige Award, visit the Web site at <http://baldrige.nist.gov>.

Learn about the benefits of joining ICMA and receiving PM magazine as part of your benefits package. To subscribe to PM, call 202/289-ICMA (202/289-4262) or e-mail bookstoremanager@icma.org.

ICMA

- [About](#)
- [Membership](#)
- [Ethics](#)
- [Priorities](#)
- [Partners](#)
- [Career Network](#)
- [News](#)
- [Events](#)

UNIVERSITY

- [About](#)
- [Annual Conference](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Credentialing](#)
- [Leadership Development](#)

PUBLICATIONS

- [Print](#)
- [Digital](#)
- [PM Magazine](#)
- [Blog](#)

PROGRAM CENTERS

- [About](#)
- [Sustainable Communities](#)
- [Performance Analytics](#)
- [Management Strategies](#)

INTERNATIONAL

- [About](#)
- [Projects](#)
- [Services](#)
- [Where We Work](#)
- [CityLinks](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [News](#)

ICMA HOME

- [Contact Us](#)
- [Sign up for E-Newsletter](#)
- [Join Now](#)
- [Make a Gift](#)



INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002-4201 800-745-8780/202-962-3680 fax 202-962-3500

Ethics

Helping the Council with an Unpopular Issue

Q. In the last city council election, one political party swept into office. A first order of business for the newly elected city council was to adopt a stricter development policy. Although the city council was unanimous in supporting the new policy, the policy is unpopular with the public so the elected officials want to take a low profile. The council has asked the city manager to help sell the new policy by writing opinion pieces for the local newspaper and seeking speaking opportunities at community meetings. Are there any ethical issues the city manager should consider in taking on this role?

A. The ICMA Code of Ethics has a guideline for Tenet 7 on political activity that allows the city manager to take on this advocacy role: Presentation of Issues. Members may assist the governing body in presenting issues involved in referenda such as bond issues, annexations, and similar matters.

The manager's role in communicating with the public also is a key principle in Tenet 9: Keep the community informed on local government affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and all local government officers; emphasize friendly and courteous service to the public; and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.

Invitation to the New Governor's Inaugural Ball

Q. A new governor was just elected, and the county manager was invited to attend her inaugural ball. The manager feels it is a good opportunity to meet people who will be working for the new administration and to lay the groundwork for future conversations on local government issues. The \$15 fee for the inaugural ball does not benefit any political party and is geared to cover basic event costs.

A. Assuming there are no political party connections to this event and the nominal fee associated with it, attendance at the inaugural ball does not create any obvious ethical conflicts. If the county manager finds out that proceeds from the event are intended to retire campaign debt or to benefit a political party, then he should not attend.

The Second Recall Campaign

Q. The mayor survived a recall campaign two years ago, and a new petition has just qualified for a second recall campaign. The town manager has learned that a town employee signed the petition, and he believes this is an inappropriate political activity. A labor attorney for the union disagrees. She says that the town's charter and the personnel manual do not ban such political activities by employees.

But the town attorney sees the legal issues differently. He says the employee did violate the standards set out in the town's personnel manual. What are the ethical responsibilities of the town manager in this situation? The last recall election was disruptive to the town and slowed momentum on many of the town's initiatives.

A. While the employee may have violated the standards in the personnel manual, he could still prevail in a protracted legal battle if this goes to court. A judge or jury could determine that the employee was exercising his constitutional rights and give that more weight than the town's behavioral standards.

Because the employee is not an ICMA member, this matter cannot be pursued as an ethical violation of the ICMA Code of Ethics. Alternatives to legal action include employee counseling and ethics training for all town employees to reinforce the values and behaviors that can strengthen the town's reputation and build public trust.

—Elizabeth Kellar
Deputy Director
ICMA
Washington, D.C.

ekellar@icma.org

Ethics advice is a popular service provided to ICMA members. The ICMA Executive Board members who serve on the Committee on Professional Conduct review the inquiries and advice published in PM magazine. ICMA members who have questions about their obligations under the ICMA Code of Ethics are encouraged to call Martha Perego at 202/962-3668 or Elizabeth Kellar at 202/962-3611.

Learn about the benefits of joining ICMA and receiving PM magazine as part of your benefits package. To subscribe to PM, call 202/289-ICMA (202/289-4262) or e-mail bookstoremanager@icma.org.

ICMA

- [About](#)
- [Membership](#)
- [Ethics](#)
- [Priorities](#)
- [Partners](#)
- [Career Network](#)
- [News](#)
- [Events](#)

UNIVERSITY

- [About](#)
- [Annual Conference](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Credentialing](#)
- [Leadership Development](#)

PUBLICATIONS

- [Print](#)
- [Digital](#)
- [PM Magazine](#)
- [Blog](#)

PROGRAM CENTERS

- [About](#)
- [Sustainable Communities](#)
- [Performance Analytics](#)
- [Management Strategies](#)

INTERNATIONAL

- [About](#)
- [Projects](#)
- [Services](#)
- [Where We Work](#)
- [CityLinks](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [News](#)

ICMA HOME

- [Contact Us](#)
- [Sign up for E-Newsletter](#)
- [Join Now](#)
- [Make a Gift](#)



INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002-4201 800-745-8780/202-962-3680 fax 202-962-3500



PM MAGAZINE

[Current Issue](#) | [About](#) | [Articles](#) | [PM+ Online Extra](#) | [Archives](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Professional Services Directory](#) | [Blog](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[ICMA Publications](#) / [PM Magazine](#) / [Archives](#)
AUGUST 2007 · VOLUME 89 · NUMBER 7

DEPARTMENTS

On Retirement

Vantagepoint Public Employee Memorial Scholarship Recipients Honored

Of all my responsibilities as leader of ICMA-RC, none brings more emotion and enthusiasm to me than when we host the annual dinner honoring the recipients of our Vantagepoint Public Employee Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Through a partnership effort with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and Concerns of Police Survivors, the scholarship program honors the sacrifice of fallen public sector employees by providing their surviving family members with an opportunity to pursue higher education.

This year, 44 students will receive a total of \$90,000 in scholarship awards, with individual awards of up to \$10,000 going to children or spouses of local or state government employees who have lost their lives in the line of duty. As in the past, recipients come from big cities and small towns; the schools they attend range from large state universities to small private and community colleges.

Since 2001, the program has awarded a total of \$520,000 in scholarships to 163 students who have attended postsecondary schools across the country. Our award winners have pursued an impressive array of educational opportunities that allowed them to fulfill their dreams in medicine, law, and education, among many other fields.

Each year, our awards dinner offers us an opportunity to meet the recipients personally and hear of their relationship to a fallen public service worker and of their hopes for the future. This year's event was held at Union Station in Washington, D.C., on July 10.

At every one of these gatherings I have been so impressed with the character of each of these students. They have overcome the traumatic circumstances of the death of a parent or spouse and still remain determined to honor their loved one's memory by continuing their academic careers. Later, when they write letters thanking us for our support, their words of appreciation truly fill my heart.

Even more remarkable is how these individuals have proven themselves also to be "true heroes." In the face of adversity, they have chosen to move forward and honor the memory of their loved one by pursuing higher education and going after their dreams. Many of them have chosen to follow in the footsteps of the loved one they lost, by becoming firefighters, police officers, teachers, and other public sector employees.

We at ICMA-RC are dedicated to providing these "true heroes," the surviving family members of fallen public sector employees, a continued opportunity to do just that.

—Joan McCallen
 President and CEO
 ICMA-RC
 Washington, D.C.
www.icmarc.org

This article is intended for educational purposes only and is not to be construed or relied upon as investment advice. The ICMA Retirement Corporation does not offer specific tax or legal advice and shall not have any liability for any consequences that arise from reliance on this material. It is recommended that you consult with your personal financial adviser prior to implementing any new tax or retirement strategy. Vantagepoint securities are sold by prospectus only, and the prospectus should be consulted before investing any money. Vantagepoint securities are distributed by ICMA RC Services, LLC, a broker dealer affiliate of ICMA-RC, member NASD/SIPC. ICMA Retirement Corporation, 777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4240; 1-800/669-7400; www.icmarc.org. AC: 1205-406.

Learn about the benefits of joining ICMA and receiving PM magazine as part of your benefits package. To subscribe to PM, call 202/289-ICMA (202/289-4262) or e-mail bookstoremanager@icma.org.

ICMA

[About](#)
[Membership](#)
[Ethics](#)
[Priorities](#)
[Partners](#)
[Career Network](#)
[News](#)
[Events](#)

UNIVERSITY

[About](#)
[Annual Conference](#)
[Professional Development](#)
[Credentialing](#)
[Leadership Development](#)

PUBLICATIONS

[Print](#)
[Digital](#)
[PM Magazine](#)
[Blog](#)

PROGRAM CENTERS

[About](#)
[Sustainable Communities](#)
[Performance Analytics](#)
[Management Strategies](#)

INTERNATIONAL

[About](#)
[Projects](#)
[Services](#)
[Where We Work](#)
[CityLinks](#)
[Resources](#)
[News](#)

ICMA HOME

[Contact Us](#)
[Sign up for E-Newsletter](#)
[Join Now](#)
[Make a Gift](#)



INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002-4201 800-745-8780/202-962-3680 fax 202-962-3500

[Privacy Statement](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

© ICMA All Rights Reserved

PM MAGAZINE

[Current Issue](#) | [About](#) | [Articles](#) | [PM+ Online Extra](#) | [Archives](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Professional Services Directory](#) | [Blog](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[ICMA Publications](#) / [PM Magazine](#) / [Archives](#)
AUGUST 2007 · VOLUME 89 · NUMBER 7

DEPARTMENTS

Profile



Bernard Lynch, ICMA-CM, is the city manager of [Lowell, Massachusetts](#).

Lowell's City Manager Rolls Up Sleeves

When Bernard Lynch took over as Lowell [Massachusetts] city manager, he did not have to wait long to find a tough challenge.

Just weeks into his new job, Lynch discovered a gaping \$8 million hole in the city's budget in the current fiscal year. He has worked over the past several months to close the deficit with a mix of spending cuts, fees, and property tax increases. The city's finances, he said, are representative of the many issues he has had to face early in his tenure.

"It's been a pretty intense period in terms of the number of issues and the pace at which they have come up," said Lynch, 50, who formerly was Chelmsford's town manager. "In Chelmsford, where I had been so many years, I had my finger on the pulse of everything happening in town, whereas in Lowell I'm dealing with a much larger landscape. It's taken some time to bring myself up to speed."

Lynch had been Chelmsford's town manager since 1989, after having worked as the town's executive secretary and as a grant writer. He beat out a field of 35 candidates, and later four finalists, to replace John Cox, who left Lowell on July 31. Lynch signed a two-year contract.

The transition from a small town to a city has been trying. Lynch left behind a bedroom suburb to run the state's fourth-largest city, with a sometimes fractious city council, an assortment of nuts-and-bolts issues typical of any urban community, and an intense political environment. With a population of 105,000, Lowell is three times larger than Chelmsford, and its \$280 million annual budget is triple the size of Chelmsford's.

"Lowell may be three times as large as Chelmsford, but the issues are 10 times as complex and much more involved," he said. "There are infrastructure needs, financial pressures, and different social concerns."

Lowell operates under a Plan E form of government in which the mayor is generally a ceremonial post, while the day-to-day management of government is handled by an appointed city manager. The structure allows Lynch considerable authority to make decisions that may prove to be unpopular with particular segments of the community.

For example, in November Lynch ended the city's policy of paying health benefits for members of Lowell's various boards and commissions. The change saves the city about \$400,000 annually. One board member, Thomas Wirtanen,

chairman of the election commission, resigned in protest.

Lynch said that his experience over 29 years in the public sector “has prepared me for the city of Lowell.

“I feel comfortable being here,” he said. “It’s a challenging moment in my career.”

Lowell Mayor William Martin praised Lynch for his work ethic in his first months on the job. “He’s certainly brought a lot of energy to the position,” Martin said. “He’s put in a great deal of hours and effort into the job and, in a short period of time, has acquired a working knowledge on how the city functions. It’s a lot to grasp all at once for someone coming in from the outside.”

Martin said balancing the budget has been the most critical concern so far this year for Lynch and for the city. “The most important thing is to bring some stabilization to the financial picture,” Martin said. “There are other things he’s had to deal with, but that’s got to be first. It impacts all the other things. Nothing functions without a budget.”

Lynch’s first few months also have drawn positive reviews from City Councilor Edward “Bud” Caulfield, one of the council’s strongest supporters of the former city manager. “He is a roll-up-your-sleeves type of manager,” Caulfield said. “He puts in long hours and has a rapport with city department heads.

“There’s a long way to go yet and a lot of challenges for the city on the horizon.”

—Alexander Reid
Staff Writer
The Boston Globe
Boston, Massachusetts

Reprinted with permission from the December 28, 2006, edition of the Boston Globe, Boston, Massachusetts.

Learn about the benefits of joining ICMA and receiving PM magazine as part of your benefits package. To subscribe to PM, call 202/289-ICMA (202/289-4262) or e-mail bookstoremanager@icma.org.

ICMA

About
Membership
Ethics
Priorities
Partners
Career Network
News
Events

UNIVERSITY

About
Annual Conference
Professional Development
Credentialing
Leadership Development

PUBLICATIONS

Print
Digital
PM Magazine
Blog

PROGRAM CENTERS

About
Sustainable Communities
Performance Analytics
Management Strategies

INTERNATIONAL

About
Projects
Services
Where We Work
CityLinks
Resources
News

ICMA HOME

Contact Us
Sign up for E-Newsletter
Join Now
Make a Gift

ICMA

INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002-4201 800-745-8780/202-962-3680 fax 202-962-3500

[Privacy Statement](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

© ICMA All Rights Reserved

Performance Matters

Measuring Performance in Local Government in Ireland—Our Experience So Far

The purpose of this article is to share with readers the experience of local authorities in Ireland of introducing performance measurement throughout Ireland's local government system. In so doing, we hope to point out the benefits of the experience to date and some of the learning that has taken place along the way.

Let me set our experience in context. Local government in Ireland—a country of more than 4 million on the periphery of Europe—is based primarily on our county structure. There is a total of 34 main local authorities—county and city councils.

National policy on key issues is made at the central government level, and local authorities implement those policies. In addition, each local authority, because of its distinguishing characteristics of size, population, topography, social structure, and the like—has scope to develop and implement policies that respond to the particular needs of its own population.

In practice, this means that although local authorities provide some services in common they also tailor services to reflect local needs, articulated by the elected members. This essentially is the essence of local government.

Against that background, the current performance measurement initiative was launched in January 2004. It arose from work undertaken in relation to enhancing customer service in local government.

Measuring performance was not an entirely new concept. For some years, local authorities had been required to prepare and report on corporate plans, including objectives and priorities. Strategy statements prepared by local authorities had also included specific targets for service delivery, and customer surveys are carried out regularly by authorities.

The audit function also ensures that a local authority's performance is scrutinized. It is also true to say that because of the very public way in which council meetings are held in Ireland, and the level of coverage they get in local papers, local authorities and their staffs are called to account on an ongoing basis. However, the introduction of a national system of performance measurement across 42 headings called service indicators was a first in the public service in Ireland.

In coming up with the approach that is being used, account was taken of the international experience and in particular that of the United Kingdom, which has traditionally reported on a large volume of indicators—more than 300 in some cases.

Some of the limitations that have been recognized in the literature were also taken on board. These included the tendency to measure quantity, whereas quality is far more difficult; the emphasis on outputs whereas outcomes are key; the difficulty in practice of achieving uniformity of interpretation and consistency of results; and the risk of diversion of resources—"what gets measured gets done."

One of the key limitations recognized was that the wider role of local authorities in Ireland, especially in the area of leading local development and building sustainable communities, is not easy to measure in practice.

WHAT DO THE INDICATORS MEASURE?

Indicators measure the scale of operations of local authorities, including the range and amount; the impact on customers in terms of responsiveness, accessibility, and mode of delivery; aspects of management and decision making; the performance by local authorities of their regulatory function; and certain aspects of the corporate (internal) function.

There are 42 indicators in total, and they span a wide range of services—housing; planning; environmental services including waste, water, litter, and fire services; roads; motor tax; libraries; arts and culture; recreational services; and

revenue collection. In selecting the indicators, an effort was made to allow for the production of information that would be meaningful and understandable to the public, elected members, and officials and that would show trends over time. Ease of data collection was also an important consideration, as were uniformity and consistency of interpretation and methodology.

The use within local authorities of the data over time for comparative purposes—in other words, their use as a management tool—rather than on league tables was stressed, comparing the performance across authorities that vary enormously in a number of ways. This reduced the fears and concerns of staff and managers and is legitimate. Given the nature of local government and the different situations of authorities, it is not always reasonable to compare results across the country!

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF MEASURING PERFORMANCE?

Measuring performance gives us hard evidence, not perceptions. The data that emerge are verified independently by a panel appointed by the relevant government minister. There are benefits in terms of transparency and accessibility of information for customers, individual authorities, and for the system as a whole. A number of system and process flaws have been identified and eliminated, local authorities have demonstrated high standards of performance, and they are already taking action where performance can and should be improved.

The results are collected and reported nationally by the Office for Local Authority Management at the Local Government Management Services Board. We are required to prepare and present a report annually to the minister. We have designed the report to present the information, which totals 75 tables, in a positive and user-friendly way.

What Contributed to the Successful Implementation of the System?

Three years later, we can say that performance measurement is embedded in the local government service in Ireland. The initiative has been recognized nationally and won a Public Service Excellence award. It has been a positive experience for all involved.

Local authorities have stepped up to the mark. Some of the features of our approach that made a difference were the degree of collaboration between the key players from the outset, the emphasis placed on ongoing communication and support, and the commitment from top managers in the system.

CONCLUSIONS

“A lot done, more to do” could sum up where we are! Public service modernization remains a key priority in Ireland. Measuring performance is an essential element of that. We have a solid foundation in place. We intend to build on our positive experience, continue in a learning mode, and work in partnership to ensure that the “added value” to the system as a whole is maximized.

—Anne O’Keeffe
Director
Office for Local Authority Management
Dublin, Ireland
 aokeeffe@lgmsb.ie

Learn about the [benefits](#) of joining ICMA and receiving PM magazine as part of your benefits package. To subscribe to PM, call 202/289-ICMA (202/289-4262) or e-mail bookstoremanager@icma.org.

ICMA

About
 Membership
 Ethics
 Priorities
 Partners
 Career Network
 News
 Events

UNIVERSITY

About
 Annual Conference
 Professional Development
 Credentialing
 Leadership Development

PUBLICATIONS

Print
 Digital
 PM Magazine
 Blog

PROGRAM CENTERS

About
 Sustainable Communities
 Performance Analytics
 Management Strategies

INTERNATIONAL

About
 Projects
 Services
 Where We Work
 CityLinks
 Resources
 News

ICMA HOME

Contact Us
 Sign up for E-Newsletter
 Join Now
 Make a Gift



INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002-4201 800-745-8780/202-962-3680 fax 202-962-3500