An Opportunity to Learn, Part II

A Survey on
The State
Of the
Management
Profession

Kurt Bressner

I n July 1994, I, as village manager of Downers Grove, Illinois, was given by the village council the unique opportunity of participating in a two-month research sabbatical. The purposes of the sabbatical were to conduct a survey on the local government management profession, to study strategic planning practices in communities nationwide, and to do research on other issues. This article addresses not only the results of my national survey of the management profession but also local leadership issues and the impact of the new breed of elected official. The commentary of mayors and managers responding to the survey provided excellent insights on these issues.

How an Interest Grew

Along with many others, I have long been interested in the state of the management profession. At the 1993 ICMA Annual Conference in Nashville, I had heard reports presented on the state of the profession. At the 1994 ICMA conference in Chicago, I was encouraged by the work of the ICMA Council-Manager Plan Task Force, a two-year effort initiated by then-ICMA President Roy Pederson to assess the status of council-manager government, to evaluate strategies for promoting citizen support of council-manager government, and to recommend ways in which ICMA and the state associations could help strengthen the partnership between elected officials and appointed managers. The interim report (June 1994) of the task force stated that its members had focused on

three key areas: (1) the changing role and perspective of elected officials; (2) the need for community-based government; and (3) the role of the media.

Moreover, at the 1994 Illinois City Management Association Conference in Galena, during talks with many managers, administrators, and assistant managers, the overwhelming sense I gained was one of concern about the state of the management profession and its relationship with elected officials. In many communities, a partnership has been forged among the manager, staff, and council, while in others, this relationship is strained. I wanted to find the reasons for both situations.

My growing interest in doing a survey of mayors and managers focused on the changing nature of the management profession, as well as on future challenges for managers in dealing with possible changes in the expectations of elected officials and citizens. Managers and mayors nationwide were surveyed on nine key issues:

1. Is the current focus among elected boards or commissions on the common good or on special interests?
2. One aspect of civic infrastructure in a community is the quality of citizen volunteers who might serve on advisory boards. Is finding qualified citizens a problem?
3. Does the respondent's community have focus or direction?
4. In the respondent's community, is mayoral leadership of the board or commission effective?
5. Do citizens have an understanding of local government?
6. Are special interest individuals (e.g., one-issue candidates) running for elective office and winning?
7. If elected, do these individuals shift to a more community-wide orientation after becoming experienced in office?

8. Has the role of the local government manager shifted?
9. Is the profession of manager more stable or less stable than it was five years ago?

The survey was prepared in summer 1994 and sent to 277 managers or administrators nationwide. Later, a second survey was produced and sent to 238 mayors nationwide. The response rate was excellent, with a 67 percent response from managers and a 45 percent response from mayors. The survey elicited contemporary viewpoints on how managers and mayors view key community issues, leadership capabilities, media influence, the impact of special interest groups on elected councils, and the role of the manager in a changing environment.

This article discusses, question by question, the responses to the survey questions and then summarizes the commentary by respondents.

Survey Q & A

1. Is the current focus among elected boards or commissions on the common good or on special interests? This question interested me because Downers Grove has been working on developing a community-based focus for services and programs, a proactive strategy to deal with the negative impacts of special interest politics and groups.

Survey results. A slight difference of opinion was found between mayors and managers on the issue of whether councils focus on the common good or on special or personal interests. Managers (51 percent) and mayors (64 percent) believe that councils or boards generally do focus on issues for the common good. A strong minority viewpoint among managers (48 percent) holds that special or personal interests seem to prevail in issues coming before elected officials; this opinion also is expressed by 33

percent of the mayors. Judging from the comments received on the survey, this issue generates a great deal of concern for both managers and mayors.

Unfortunately, the observations of managers on the capability of elected councils to reflect the common good in their communities were not positive:

> Elected officials increasingly are predisposed to narrower views, aims, or goals than the community good. This has been a change from the past. *Manager, community of 30,000*

> Traditional concept [was] that elected officials contributed to the quality of the community. Current thought is that elected officials use their offices to further their careers in politics or to change the local tradition of service to the community. *Manager, community of 15,000*

> Governing authorities are more willing to listen to strong-willed individuals and interest groups. *Manager, community of 180,000*

> The new breed of elected official is distrustful of government and, relatedly, staff. The board commitment to professional management is changing with changing politicians. The new breed wants more power to see its agendas through and view the manager as a barrier. *Manager, community of 21,000*

A mayor offered reasons why elected officials must sometimes respond to special interests:

> Any village board, no matter how community-minded it is, at times has to bow to some political pressure from its constituents. While managers and administrators are trained to be nonpolitical, they must understand the political realities that face their boards. *Mayor, community of 23,000*

Finally, as noted by mayors, a focus on the common good by the manager is sometimes risky:

> CMs are better trained [now]; therefore, [they] pursue plans and programs for the good of the community, sometimes stepping on the toes of the many special interest councilpersons. *Mayor, community of 85,000*

> Trustees have longevity on the job (like Congress) and have disdain for the voters and staff (because they themselves are untouchable). There is micromanaging, calling on the day-to-day operations with the threat that if their special interests are not carried out, they will get the votes to fire the manager. This definitely is not what is best for the community as a whole. *Mayor, community of 42,000*

A mayor from Illinois summed up the situation by offering a commentary on the education of elected officials, the role of the mayor, and the approach the manager follows in dealing with the council, staff, and community:

> Councilmembers who have special interest mentalities tend to meddle in administration. This erodes the manager's ability to function. As rational thought and experience become more prevalent, managers regain authority. I suggest that more education on the roles of manager and council would help. In addition, the mayor's support of the council-manager form of government is critical.

My experience with two managers has been 180 degrees apart. The first was disastrous

due to a power trip by the manager and the lack of a shared philosophy for the community. The current experience is good due to teamwork on both sides. *Mayor, community of 35,000*

2. One aspect of civic infrastructure in a community is the quality of citizen volunteers who might serve on advisory boards. Is finding qualified citizens a problem? In this connection, several articles in the spring 1993 issue of *National Civic Review* discussed local officials' need to build a civic infrastructure of leadership and citizen volunteers and pointed out that this effort is just as important as building and maintaining the physical plant in a community.

The experience in Downers Grove has been good. One of the village councilmembers is responsible for recruiting members of advisory boards and commissions. The councilmember is assisted by a part-time staff member, who maintains a database of volunteers, terms of office, and interest areas of volunteers. A talent pool of more than 300 persons is maintained. This effort takes commitment on the part of the government to find and retain volunteers for civic boards and commissions.

Other communities with similar programs are Holland, Michigan; Park Forest, Illinois; and Lubbock, Texas. Kalispell, Montana, has established a joint city/chamber of commerce training program that provides extensive community leadership training for citizens. Established in 1991, "Leadership Flathead," which was developed with the assistance of the National Association for Community Leadership, based in Indianapolis, trains approximately 24 persons each year.

Survey results. Mayors and managers disagree over the question of whether there is an increased level of volunteer help in their communities. Fifty-one percent of managers feel

that there has not been an increase in volunteer service, while 66 percent of the mayors believe that there has been a rise.

In a comment received on this topic, a mayor reflected frustration over how to get people involved in local government:

Democracy, as we know it, is changing. The missing ingredient is the people. The few who care are jaded now, and more and more are staying away, saying, "Why bother?" We need to recruit more optimists (or masochists) to do what is right because it is right and in the best interests of the many—not [just to recruit] the same five squeaky wheels.

They volunteer when asked, but they are hamstrung and frustrated because the elected officials want the final say in everything they try to do: beautification, festivals, renovations, economic development, and so on. Once again, who gets the credit? *Mayor, community of 42,000*

Before an effort can succeed in this key area, a long-range strategy for community-based involvement must be developed and supported by the mayor, council, manager, and staff. A recent work by Richard Harwood for the Kettering Foundation, *Citizens and Politics* (1991), indicates that for local government a reservoir of citizen talent is available, if government is able to develop means of reaching citizens. The report suggests that nontraditional methods of outreach to citizens are needed—such as new public places centered around neighborhood associations, PTAs, and church groups—to provide a path toward success in developing a renewed sense of volunteerism. As Harwood states, "Clearly, we have learned in this research that the occasional town meeting [or] public hearing that leg-

islators and mayors and other public officials hold is not adequate [according] to citizens' ideas of the democratic process."

The Kettering Foundation, however, reports positive news for local government in the United States. Although alienated from state and federal government, citizens show a strong interest in local government: ". . . [W]e have found that people's perception of having a diminished voice in national politics does not hold true on the local level. Many participants in the group discussions observed that they do feel a greater sense of being heard as public decisions get closer to home."

This observation was shared by a manager:

Local government's role has increased in relation to state and federal government. People are more interested in local government because they feel they can have a tremendous impact on service provision and on the cost of those services. *Manager, resort community of 3,000, in summer 38,000*

3. Does the respondent's community have focus or direction? Many communities have embraced the concepts of strategic planning, TQM, and cooperative goal setting between staff and council. Downers Grove has conducted annual strategic planning sessions for the past 15 years. In the current year, the council has identified and ranked 198 objectives in 14 areas of community interest. The objectives include ongoing programs and services, short-term goals, and long-term initiatives.

Other communities have used the services of local colleges and universities to assist them in setting priorities. The city of Newton, Iowa, for example, has developed its goals with the assistance of the local university. Coral Springs, Florida, currently is undergoing a seven-year reorganiza-

tion plan linking its goals, its mission, and council involvement. Palatine, Illinois, has undertaken a similar program with excellent results, as reported by the council. And Springfield, Missouri, also has developed a good goals system, in its case tied to an innovative priority-setting system used by its elected officials.

Survey results. Both mayors (75 percent) and managers (57 percent) appear to support the perception of community direction, focus, or goals. Generally, however, managers are more critical. About 41 percent of managers report that they feel their communities do not have direction, focus, or goals, as opposed to only 21 percent of mayors.

> We have a plan; [the problem is] just trying to build consensus on how to implement what, when, and who's going to get the credit. *Mayor, community of 42,000*

> By encouraging the elected officials to meet in a training environment to enhance team building, consensus is built on such important things as values, philosophy, beliefs, etc. *Mayor, community of 37,000*

In many communities, a structured strategic planning process provides the necessary focus for community direction. According to Gerald T. Gabris, "Well-designed strategic goal-setting exercises enable elected officials to grapple with complex political issues in a highly effective and productive manner and to provide administrative staffs with an invaluable tool for responding effectively to the perceived needs of elected officials in a rational, systematic context" (1989 article in *Public Productivity & Management Review*).

4. In the respondent's community, is mayoral leadership of the board or commission effective? Leadership

skills of the mayor were of particular concern to several managers I talked with during my sabbatical leave. The survey asked both managers and mayors to evaluate the leadership skills of the mayor.

The leadership of the mayor in the council-manager form of government is the subject of a study by James Svara (*Facilitative Leadership in Local Government*, 1994). Of particular interest is the book's case study of Mayor Jim Melvin of Greensboro, North Carolina, whose key leadership functions as mayor in this council-manager community include the following:

- Preside at traditional functions, perform ceremonial tasks, and act as spokesperson for the city government.
- Identify issues and problems for consideration, promote an awareness of important concerns, and promote understanding across the city by exchange of information.
- Increase the manager's awareness of the council's preferences, and indicate to the manager how the council would react to administrative proposals.
- Work as a team builder to unify the council and build consensus; promote full expression of ideas and concerns.
- Bring the council into active involvement to establish goals and objectives for the city government.
- Project a favorable image of the city.

Survey results. Both the mayors (75 percent) and the managers (67 percent) generally concur that the mayor is an effective leader. Only 15 percent of the mayors feel they are ineffective, whereas 31 percent of the managers are more critical of them. Generally, the survey results indicate good leadership skills on the part of mayors.

There was a strong minority view-

point on this issue, however, based on comments received from survey participants.

Mayors have abdicated their role probably because they do not have enough time to do justice to their position. Most mayors have to work for a living, and their idea of . . . a job for honor's sake does not put bread on the table. *Mayor, community of 23,000*

At times, it seems that the council is the source of misery for the mayor and, relatedly, the manager:

On the question of the board or council responding well to the leadership of the mayor, there are times when I wonder if they would respond to anyone. *Mayor, community of 15,000*

5. Do citizens have an understanding of local government?
During my sabbatical, I heard frustrated appointed and elected officials lament citizens' lack of understanding of local government. The survey asked a basic question that generated much commentary.

Many communities nationwide are working hard to improve the relationship and communication with citizens and, hopefully, citizens' understanding of what local government does. The survey results, however, indicate that a crisis exists. The report of ICMA's Council-Manager Plan Task Force has identified changes in communications with the citizen as a priority concern.

In that report, positive strategies include proactive public relations, self-generated media coverage, community-based public information programs, and education of staff on community issues. Specific expertise in media relations, and the art of coping with negative media coverage, also are essential skills that need to be developed.

Survey results. Both mayors (76 percent) and managers (89 percent) strongly believe that citizens do not understand local government.

In their comments, mayors and managers identified the media contribution to this problem and also commented extensively on the open hostility of the public toward government:

Though I consider myself conservative, I think you can thank the breed of media [represented by] Rush Limbaugh and his ilk for some of the negativism present regarding government today. *Manager, community of 20,000*

In metropolitan areas, the electronic media have had an impact on how citizens view their local governments, often by failing to differentiate between the local community and a major city nearby:

Chicago is the model everybody sees on television. The suburbs don't work that way. *Mayor, community of 42,000*

Finally, local officials note that the headlines, sound bites, video clips, or quotes of the week affect how citizens view local government.

The attitude by citizens and elected officials [is to] want quick answers and fixes. Perhaps, this is more a reflection of the television generations, for whom 60 minutes is all that is needed to solve an issue? *Manager, community of 14,000*

The role of citizens' special interest groups also evokes sharp criticism from some mayors and managers:

Governance by tantrum of the small minority. Special-interest taxation lobbying. Special interest minorities' use of the press.

Abuse of public officials for their objectivity. *Mayor, community of 34,000*

There is a general dissatisfaction by citizens and a need to "shoot at someone." *Manager, community of 8,000*

I believe that our population increasingly has learned to become spoiled brats. They want theirs and don't care about anyone else. They will stop at nothing to get their way, and their increasingly scurrilous methods are deterring quality people from running for office and quality people from working for government. Our town has been blessed with outstanding professional management, and without it we're lost. *Mayor, community of 34,000*

In the last 15 years that I've been doing this, no one has ever come before me and said, "I'm for this project." They only come when it's hitting their pocketbook or is in their backyard. *Mayor, community of 42,000*

From the viewpoint of citizens, confusion exists on how to express an opinion or even how to participate in local government. In the Kettering Foundation's *Citizens and Politics,* a citizen is quoted as saying, "I'm never aware of an opportunity to go somewhere and express my opinion and to have someone hear what I have to say. I don't have time to sit down and write a letter. I don't even know where I would send it. I could write to the editorial page, but . . . I wonder if anyone who is in a position to make changes would read my editorial."

What emerges is a sad, curious standoff: government officials express uncomplimentary assessments of citizen attitudes, and citizens express confusion and frustration

about their ability to communicate meaningfully and cause change.

6. Are special interest individuals (e.g., one-issue candidates) running for elective office and winning? Particular interest in this issue had been evident to me at the 1994 Illinois city management meeting, as managers noted that, in Illinois at least, a flurry of special interest candidates had been winning elective office.

Survey results. Mayors (67 percent) and managers (74 percent) agree that a number of candidates running for office today represent a special interest group rather than a community-wide focus. By comparison, 84 percent of the Illinois managers felt that special interest candidates were running for office, while 65 percent of the Illinois mayors agreed.

But are these special interest candidates getting elected? Fifty-three percent of the managers agreed, but only 35 percent of the mayors felt that these candidates were winning.

This survey response was not a surprise, given the negative comments that accompanied the survey results. As a group, managers were much more cynical about special interest candidates' winning. Interestingly, commentary referred to the impact of the baby boomers' assuming office in greater numbers:

Some of the change is cyclical; however, much can be attributed to elected officials' desire to be more involved in the administration of policies. The coming-of-age of baby boomers who are suspicious of government also

seems to be a factor. Special interests prevail over community interest more often than ever before. *Manager, community of 27,000*

I believe the baby boomers, who were willing to fight against the draft in Vietnam and to lead demonstrations, now are being elected to political office. These individuals are, in many instances, not satisfied with the answers to typical problems faced by local government. *Manager, community of 12,000*

From where we sit, our generation [the baby boomers] created the concept of advocacy/special interests, and we certainly have more difficult jobs as a result. *Manager, community of 18,000*

Several survey responses also lamented the change in the type of person running for office and winning. The small businessman or local store owner, for example, does not appear to be interested in running for office any more. Traditional candidates are being replaced by more active and political councilmembers:

> It seems to me that there has to be a decline in the number of small business owners running for local elective office. There are doubtless many reasons for this, but I suspect that fear of economic reprisal for unpopular public positions is a prime reason. This is unfortunate, since my experience [is that] these people have been among the best at representing community-wide interests. *Manager, community of 10,000*

> City council seats are now sought and won by politicians looking to move up rather than the older career butcher, baker, or candlestickmaker, [leading] to the sacrifice of the long-term best interests of the community as a whole. *Manager, community of 11,000*

7. If elected, do these individuals shift to a more community-wide orientation after becoming experienced in office? If special interest candidates win, what happens to them in office? Do these individuals change their focus?

Survey results. There is certainly a basis for optimism in the results of this question. Managers (65 percent) and mayors (60 percent), agree that such a shift occurs in special interest candidates after they have been in office for a period of time. A change occurs as individuals are required by the legislative process to interact with their peers on the council or board and with the staff. In Illinois, 61 per-

cent of the managers believed that this shift to a community-wide focus had occurred.

In Normal, Illinois, an elected official was asked by the town newsletter to reflect on her experiences as a member of the city council. Sonja Reece had served on the council for three years. According to *Normal Now,*

> . . . .Her commitment to the community and concern for managed growth are what directed her to the planning commission and city council. Although there are many ceremonious events to attend as an elected official, the most exciting part of serving on the council is "attempting to maintain the delicate balance of acting for the good of the community while addressing the individual concerns on a variety of issues," according to Reece. "I enjoy being able to meet with residents and resolve issues at a neighborhood level. Local government is far more efficient and responsive than any other governmental unit, and it is gratifying to see results and know that I was afforded an opportunity to participate in those decisions.

In a sense, Question 7 was the acid test of the survey. Mayors and managers feel that, while present election scenes may produce elected officials from special interest camps, a change occurs in the overall focus of elected officials from a special interest to a more community-based interest. In some communities, however, this process has not occurred, resulting in friction between old and new councilmembers:

> I see resentment on the part of the "new" council for the previous council. The new councilperson sees the manager as one of the opposition rather than as a friend, ally, or team

player. *Manager, community of 36,000*

> In my own community, we have been fortunate to get community-minded candidates from the general population. Occasionally, we have had the single-issue person on the board, but he/she has been ineffective in his/her attempt to pull the board in that direction. With a stable board that understands and acts in the best interests of the community as a whole, a personable and competent manager or administrator should enjoy success. *Mayor, community of 23,000*

> The economy isn't as good and forces the manager to make unpopular recommendations, such as layoffs and program and service reductions. Newly elected officials, usually young, who believe they have all the answers are unaware of the complexities of running a municipality. They have agendas beyond the traditional service to the community. *Manager, community of 28,000*

Sometimes, a shift on the board or council causes a fundamental shift in the manner in which the staff interacts with the council and the community:

> I am learning, along with a number of other city employees, how to make the transition from a team emphasizing responsibility to a team emphasizing responsiveness. My community has seen a complete changeover in mayor and council membership in just two years. *Manager, community of 32,000*

8. Has the role of the local government manager shifted? Contemporary literature on the management profession has addressed extensively the "myth of the policy/administrative dichotomy." Evidently, however,

mayors generally do not accept the idea of change in the management profession, where the distinction between policy and administration is blurred.

For this key question, the results indicate that an ongoing dialogue between mayors and managers is needed.

Survey results. A surprising difference of opinion between managers and mayors is indicated over the role of the manager. Of managers, 63 percent feel that the role of the manager has changed from that of leader of the professional staff, making recommendations to the council, to that of a facilitator of the expectations and needs of many interest groups. Only 27 percent of the mayors, however, share this view, with 64 percent believing that the more traditional view of "administration and policy segregation" is the norm, an idea shared by only 29 percent of the managers. This sharp difference in opinion over the role of the manager merits further study.

The recent effort by ICMA to bring mayors and managers together for focus discussions is a step in the right direction. In addition, studies by James Svara on the leadership characteristics of mayors (in his book *Facilitative Leadership*) should help the dialogue greatly.

In the author's opinion, there is a great deal of change occurring in the leadership roles of both the manager and the mayor. The reluctance of mayors to indicate a change in the leadership role of the manager may represent an identity crisis in their perception of their own role as mayor.

Managers seem to feel that the role of the manager has changed considerably:

I believe it is important for managers to realize they are a member of a team rather than a director of the team. The team, in my

opinion, is made up of elected officials, the manager, and the village staff, the advisory boards, and the citizens. The manager is a member of that team, but he or she is not the director of that team. I suggest that if we involve the elected officials or appointed officials in projects or items of concern, an attitude develops that is positive and, in fact, that realizes goals that may have been envisioned. Without the cooperation and interplay, those goals may never be accomplished. *Manager, community of 20,000*

On average, elected officials seem to want and expect a larger role and greater involvement in administrative matters, and managers must be more politically astute. The line between policy and administration increasingly is becoming blurred. *Manager, community of 10,000*

Several mayors commented on the changed responsibilities of the manager:

We've lost a lot of good ones [managers] of late. There was a relationship: the board set policy, and the manager carried it out along with the day-to-day business of the community. Now, he or she must check with four people before a decision is made. *Mayor, community of 42,000*

On the question of the role of the city manager changing from leader to staff to a broker role: at times, the manager needs to take into consideration the issues of the special interest groups to build consensus. He or she should not allow his or her professional judgment to be clouded by biases against special interest groups. *Mayor, community of 15,000*

As to the role of the manager evolving from leader of the professional staff and the person who makes recommendations into a new role of "brokering," I think that sometimes keeping the board happy means keeping one's job. What is best for the community comes after that. *Mayor, community of 42,000*

Another mayor took a more traditional view of the role of the manager:

Let the city manager manage the city, and the mayor and city council set the policy, and don't forget it! *Mayor, community of 20,000*

9. Is the profession of manager more stable or less stable than it was five years ago? Survey results indicate a significant difference of opinion between the managers and the mayors on this final question.

Survey results. On the issue of job stability, 62 percent of mayors believe there is as much stability in the manager's profession now as there was five years ago; 72 percent of the managers, however, perceive stability in the profession as lessening.

Two mayors, apparently representing a minority viewpoint, offered this comment on the stability of the local government management profession:

Special interest groups are making it much more difficult for local government managers, as well as elected officials, to function. This in turn makes managers less secure in their position; thus, they may start looking for another position sooner. They also may be forced to start looking by dissident councilmembers. *Mayor, community of 25,000*

The shifting attitude of the electorate and of newly elected officials reflects antigovernment sentiments. The manager is seen as a target for change. The manager needs to be aware of and more adaptable to a more political role. *Mayor, community of 49,000*

Mayors also offered advice to managers on such characteristics as a lack of continual training or improvement, poor communication skills with council, political naivete, and complacency as key factors in job instability:

Unfortunately, a lot of managers do not keep their management skills up to date. Soon, poorer-quality work begins to show up, and councils become pressured to make changes. *Mayor, community of 15,000*

Managers should be cautious to inform each councilor about important issues equally. Councilors [may] feel they are in or out of the information loop. *Mayor, community of 34,000*

In mine and surrounding communities, cities, it seems to me that several managers have served beyond their useful terms. I attribute this to a lack of understanding by councilmembers as to their responsibility to maintain dynamic leadership in the manager's position. *Mayor, community of 42,000*

There have been changes in the attitudes of residents and businesses. They are holding elected officials responsible for decisions. Elected officials today are more active and are full-time, therefore more visible. Managers need to adjust to the second seat. *Mayor, community of 32,000*

Elected officials have got to understand the role of the manager, and vice versa. The people involved must be committed to working together, or there will be problems. *Mayor, community of 37,000*

National trends of downsizing corporations have created the opinion that no one has a permanent position. This belief gives elected officials a more comfortable feeling about removing a city manager. *Mayor, community of 58,000*

The viewpoint that the profession is less stable also yielded several interesting comments from managers:

Bond rating agencies have a watch list for communities. I think ICMA and ILCMA should establish a watch list of communities that act in a way that promotes a swinging door for professional managers. This may stop elected officials from some of their actions. *Manager, community of 15,000*

Have you noticed there are few managers over 50 in the state of Illinois? *Manager, community of 15,000*

I believe there is more of a 'What's in it for me?' attitude among the new board members. The manager has to deal with this, with serving as the "broker," in dealing with elected officials at all levels. The job is, by necessity, becoming more political and consequently more unstable. *Manager, community of 32,000*

Changes in the private sector, such as "rightsizing" and the quality focus, slowly are making their way into the profession. No profession is as stable now as it was five years ago. *Manager, community of 7,000*

A manager offered an excellent recap of the situation and a prescription for success:

Even though the profession is less stable, I still believe that most councils and mayors support the manager. We must work continually with them to make certain that they understand we are there to help them and must work as a team. Newly elected officials do not understand this relationship. We therefore must work in this area. *Manager, community of 36,000*

Findings

The state of the profession appears healthier than I had expected. The commentary accompanying the survey results embodied several important themes:

- A crisis exists in the lack of citizen understanding about local government. Local officials must look to proactive methods of training for community leadership and improved methods of informing residents about local government.
- In most cases, managers and mayors have developed an effective partnership.
- Too many managers, according to mayors, resist change and new ideas.
- According to mayors, managers need to keep their management and professional skills current.

I am pleased to provide this report of research conducted during my sabbatical. I certainly will appreciate any comments on the project and can be reached at the address below. ▣

Kurt Bressner is village manager, Downers Grove, Illinois. His address is 801 Burlington, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515, 708/719-4567, fax 708/719-4593, e-mail bressner@interaccess.com.