

Veterans Local Government Management Fellowship (VLGMF) Sample Workplan Structure

The workplan is designed to provide a fellow participating in the Veterans Local Government Management Fellowship with firsthand experience of a local government career. The program should be specifically tailored to each fellow's skillset and goals as well as the host organization's structure. You should expose the fellow to a wide range of experiences. This fellowship will assist the fellow in choosing their career path.

Integrated Departmental Rotation and Capstone Project

To strengthen fellow development and maximize employment outcomes, it is recommended that the fellowship incorporate a structured combination of departmental rotations and a cumulative capstone project. This model gives program leadership, department directors, and mentors clear and consistent opportunities to evaluate each fellow's work product, professional conduct, communication skills, and ability to seek and apply guidance from staff and senior leadership.

The project will depend on the host community's needs and the fellow's experience, skills and interest. Some examples include tracking strategic plan implementation, developing a department performance dashboard or budget performance dashboard, capital improvement plan (CIP) prioritization, fee schedule review, development of an employee retention strategy, recruitment and hiring process review, housing needs assessment, etc.

Workplan Structure Overview

The integrated model operates in three phases across the 12–24-week fellowship. Each phase builds on the last, connecting rotation experience directly to project deliverables and leadership engagement.

The following sample workplan is based on a 16-week fellowship but can be adjusted to shorter or longer fellowships.

Phase	Departmental Rotation Activities	Capstone Project Milestone
Phase 1: Foundation (Weeks 1–4)	Orientation, HR onboarding, and LG101 Certification. Brief introductory shadowing sessions with at least two department directors to expose fellows to the breadth of local government operations.	Fellow meets with mentor to identify a project topic aligned with organizational needs and professional goals. Problem statement and project scope submitted for approval by end of Week 4.
Phase 2: Rotation &	Fellows complete their selected Track rotations (Logistics, HR/EM, General, or	Fellow conducts research, interviews department staff, and other activities

Research (Weeks 5–15)	Hybrid). (See below for sample rotations) Each rotation host department completes a structured observation checklist assessing work quality, initiative, communication, and professionalism (related to project)	related to the project while participating in track rotations. Midpoint check-in with mentor in Week 10 to review progress. Draft deliverable submitted by end of Week 14.
Phase 3: Presentation & Close-Out (Week 16+)	Exit interview with HR and mentor. Rotation hosts invited to attend final presentation to confirm performance observations and signal interest in future employment engagement with the fellow.	Final capstone presentation delivered to the Council/Board of Commissioners and/or work team. Presentation includes problem statement, methodology, findings, and actionable recommendations for the organization.

Sample Tracks:

Based on the project, the fellow can be introduced to specific tracks focused on different aspects of local government operations. Below are sample tracks and schedules.

Planning/Infrastructure Track: Provides a broad understanding of the planning and implementation of operations throughout the organization

Weeks 5	Planning & Zoning (Case Management/Shadow)	Director Planning and Zoning
Week 6	Open Spaces (Field Work)	Parks Director
Week 7	Public Works Operations (Shadow)	DPW Director
Week 8	Road and Bridge (Shadow)	Road and Bridge Director
Week 9	Budget Management (Shadow)	Budget Director

Human Resources/Emergency Management Track: Provides a broad understanding of the issues surrounding the local government workforce

Weeks 5-6	Human Resources	Human Resources Director
Week 7	Emergency Management Services	EMS Director
Week 8	Dispatch	EMS Director
Week 9	Risk Management	Risk Management Director

General Track: Provides a broad understanding of the role of local government across all departments.

Weeks 5	Human Services	Director of Human Services
Week 6	Fleet & Facilities Management	Deputy County Manager
Week 7	Planning & Zoning	Director of Planning and Zoning
Week 8	Open Spaces	Parks Director

Week 9	Budget & Accounting	Finance and IT Director
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Fellow Assessment Framework

The combined rotation-and-project model creates multiple, layered opportunities to observe and document fellow performance across real work environments. Assessment occurs through three channels:

- 1. Rotation Host Observations:** Each department director or designee completes a standardized one-page observation form at the conclusion of the rotation. The form captures work quality, initiative, responsiveness to feedback, and professional interactions with staff and leadership. These forms are submitted to the program mentor and retained in the fellow's record.
- 2. Mentor and Leadership Check-Ins:** Formal midpoint and end-of-fellowship conversations between the fellow, mentor, and at least one senior leader assess how the fellow seeks guidance, responds to direction, and demonstrates growth over the fellowship period. Notes from these sessions are added to the fellow's record and used to inform any post-fellowship employment discussions.
- 3. Capstone Project Evaluation:** The written report and final presentation are scored by the mentor and at least two department directors using a shared rubric covering analytical quality, clarity of communication, relevance of recommendations, and presentation skills. This work product serves as a professional portfolio artifact the fellow can use during future job searches.

Increasing Employment Opportunities

The rotation-and-project design directly supports post-fellowship employment by building relationships between fellows and hiring managers across the organization. Department directors who host rotations gain firsthand knowledge of the fellow's capabilities and work style well before any vacancy arises. The capstone project demonstrates applied analytical and communication skills to a broad leadership audience, including elected officials. Together, these elements create a documented, multi-source performance record that can support internal hiring decisions and allow fellows to enter the local government job market with verified work experience and professional references.

It is recommended that program coordinators share the fellow's completed assessment record and capstone materials with department directors so that the fellow can be considered for any open positions within the organization.

Host Direction and Project Expectations

Hosts should treat the VLGMF fellowship as a structured professional development opportunity, not simply as a shadowing assignment. Each fellow should be assigned a primary mentor or supervisor responsible for onboarding, project selection, weekly check-ins, feedback, and final evaluation. Hosts should also identify department rotation liaisons who can expose the fellow to core local government functions and provide brief feedback on the fellow's professionalism, initiative, communication, and work quality. Hosts should provide access to relevant staff, documents, meetings, and operational context while requiring a clear work product.

Each fellow should complete a practical capstone project tied to a real organizational need, such as a sales tax feasibility assessment, budget or financial projection, cost-benefit analysis, police academy curriculum project, fleet replacement model, grant process review, capital planning tool, or other local government policy or operational analysis. The project should be scoped for the available fellowship period. In addition, fellows should be given an opportunity to participate in leadership meetings, networking lunches, team meetings, and council meetings, as appropriate.

At a minimum, the fellow should complete a written summary or report and present a final presentation to the work team, senior leadership, or governing body, complete the ICMA Local Government 101 Certification, and write a 500-word article/reflection on the fellowship experience.