

A Valuable Resource: ICMA State Liaisons

Gerald Young

When ICMA's annual conference rolls around, attendees wear all sorts of ribbons on their nametags, including ones identifying them as board members, award winners, life members, speakers, and state liaisons. If you are not familiar with the state liaison program, you might have glanced at these ribbons and just kept walking. These state liaisons, however, represent a valuable front line that can provide you with information on ICMA programs and services and also can discuss general local government issues **knowledgeably**. Do you know who your state liaison is?

State Meetings

Probably, the only time when most ICMA members interact with their state liaisons is at a state association meeting. This is an opportunity for liaisons to share updates from ICMA and to listen firsthand to the issues and concerns members are voicing on a local level. ICMA emphasizes this face-to-face contact, splitting the annual **state-meeting** calendar between the ICMA regional vice presidents and the staff state liaisons, so that each state **association's** lines of communication and feedback remain open and vital.

Those of you who have served as state association officers have had additional occasion to work with ICMA state liaisons. Throughout the year, liaisons work with state officers to plan state-hosted ICMA educational sessions and workshops, gather nominees for ICMA committees, swap newsletter updates and articles, and participate in state officers' meetings at the annual conference. Liaisons often discuss means of sharing technical or programmatic support among the associations: through Website hosting, member-in-transition assistance, or corporate partner support, for instance. A few liaisons also serve as regional team leaders who work closely with state officers, other liaisons, and ICMA's vice presidents to identify common issues, share information, and coordinate meetings among neighboring states.

As far as educational sessions are concerned, liaisons have helped both to recommend and arrange for speakers and to conduct sessions themselves. Because of their day-to-day responsibilities for ICMA, liaisons have significant background in a range of issues: ethics, performance measurement, the council-manager form of government and its issues, and best practices. They also can help with such specialized programs as the Applied Knowledge Assessment for personal planning of members' professional development, a tool developed by ICMA members in conjunction with Georgia State University.

Personal Contact

Depending on what moves you've recently made in your career, you may have had additional one-on-one contact with your state liaison.

When ICMA members finds themselves in transition, state liaisons are available to inform them of ICMA programs and publications for members in transition, to link them with the network of ICMA Range Riders and colleagues who can be of assistance, and to lend an ear during a difficult time. Be-



ICMA state liaisons. Top row (left to right): Ross Hoff, Felicia Logan, Michael Lawson, Gerald Young, Barbara Moore, Michele Frisby, and Betsy Shernnm. Seated (left to right): Casey Mann, Martha Perego, and Lisa Danielpour. Not pictured: George Barbour, Elizabeth Kellar, Mosi Kitwana, Rita Soler Ossolinski, Frank Ohnesorgen, and Louise Snyder.

cause many states also offer various programs to assist members in transition, the liaisons also serve as clearinghouses of ideas and approaches that have been tried elsewhere.

Outreach is also an important goal when members find themselves moving to a new state or taking on the position of manager for the first time. A chat with a state liaison can often help steer a member to in-state networks, local peers and mentors, relevant ICMA publications, or other assistance to ease this transition. (Note that one such publication, the handbook produced by the First-Time Administrators' Task Force,

is available for members to download through the Members' Library at ICMA's Web site icma.org.)

This outreach works both ways. If you have a question about ICMA but can't figure out whom to call, you can always ask your state liaison. With their experience at ICMA and their long histories of working with members in individual states, liaisons are ideally positioned to be of service.

Just Who Are They?

In many ways, the ICMA state liaisons are just like the members. Although

State Liaisons at a Glance

Percentage of State Liaisons Who:

Serve on ICMA's management team	47%
Are ICMA members	40%
Came to ICMA from local government ¹	67%

Average Tenure of State Liaisons:

As a state liaison	8.6 years
With ICMA	11.2 years
With local government ¹	9.3 years

¹Includes state associations of local governments, municipal leagues, and councils of government.

ICMA State Liaisons

For general inquiries about ICMA, check its Web site at icma.org or call 202/289-4262. Members also can communicate with ICMA by contacting membership@icma.org or calling 202/962-3680. To reach a state liaison at an ICMA extension, dial 202/962- plus the four-digit number listed after each name.

All ICMA staff can be sent e-mail messages through the Internet using addresses that include their first initials and last names (example: bhansell@icma.org).

Northeast Region, Team Lead Rita Soler Ossolinski		
Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire,		
Vermont	Michele Frisby	3658
Connecticut, Rhode Island	Michael Lawson	3634
Delaware, District of Columbia,		
Maryland, New Jersey, New York,		
Pennsylvania	Rita Soler Ossolinski	3635
Southeast Region, Team Lead Felicia Logan		
Florida, Louisiana, Virginia	Felicia Logan	3626
Kentucky, North Carolina	Martha Perego	3668
Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina	Louise Snyder	845/446-3322
Georgia, Tennessee , West Virginia	Gerald Young	3652
Midwest Region, Team Leader: Barbara Moore		
Ohio	Lisa Danielpour	Tel: 216/291-1231 Fax: 216/291-1293 Voice mail: 202/962-3640
Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin	Ross Hoff	3646
Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri	Barbara Moore	3643
Mountain Plains Region, Team Leader: Betsy Sherman		
Arizona, New Mexico	Frank Ohnesorgen	Tel: 480/759-4880 Fax: 480/759-4882
Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska,		
North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah,		
Wyoming		
Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas	Mosi Kitwana	3649
	Betsy Sherman	3612
West Coast Region		
Alaska, California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington		
West Coast Office Director	George Barbour	Tel: 650/854-0927 Fax: 650/854-0942
West Coast Team Leader	Elizabeth Kellar	3611
Program Coordinator	Betsy Sherman	3612

Jan-01

ICMA has a number of specialized staff just as your organizations do (IT specialists, accountants, and so forth), many of these staff members have come from a long background in local government management.

Of the 15 ICMA staff members who

currently serve as state liaisons, 10 have direct professional experience working for local **governments—experience** in jobs ranging from staff positions at a state association of city/county management, state municipal league, or council of governments to positions throughout

local government, including city manager, department head, or management analyst. Taken together, the liaisons have worked in local government or related organizations for an average of 9.3 years each.

Another way in which the state liaisons resemble the ICMA membership is in their geographic diversity. In a career in which relocations are common, the current group of 15 liaisons has lived or worked in a total of 22 states and assisted in various international exchanges. Even now, the group is so widely scattered that it's not even possible to bring everyone together for a group photo. Liaisons are currently **operating out of the District of Columbia**, Virginia, New York, Ohio, Arizona, and California.

Of course, it should come as no surprise how much the liaisons are like ICMA members. In fact, before joining the ICMA staff, six of them were already members of the Association.

Within ICMA, the **liaisons'** expertise is even more extensive. State liaisons have been working for the Association for an average of 11.2 years, with an average of 8.6 of these years spent serving as liaisons.

State liaison work is just a small part of their overall responsibilities. Their full-time job duties, including those of the seven liaisons who serve on ICMA's management team, bring them a depth of understanding of ICMA programs and ideals that enriches both their state contacts and the organization as a whole. And when there are issues related to the profession to discuss among the membership, this same corps of liaisons lends its staff assistance to every work group from the Small Community Task Force, to the Hispanic Network, to the Strategic Planning Committee.

See You Soon

Your feedback to and contact with the state liaisons are essential to continuing the rapport and relationships

ICMA has fostered state by state. If you have a question or just want to share your opinion on a local government issue, use the state liaison roster accompanying this article to e-mail or call your liaison. Watch the ICMA Web site in the coming months for individual profiles and photos of ICMA's state liaisons. Then, the next time you see your liaison at the annual conference, the Best Practices Symposium, or your own state association's business meeting, you'll recognize the person saying a friendly hello. **ICMA**

Gerald Young has been an ICMA member since 1989. Joining the ICMA staff in 1998, he currently serves as the state liaison to Georgia, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

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