

ICMA Survey: Asian Pacific American Local Government Professionals 2016

[Executive Summary](#)

ICMA conducted this survey at the request of several members who were interested in exploring the need and interest in building a professional network of Asian Pacific American (APA) local government professionals. Ed Shikada, Reyna Farrales, and Rey Arellano, among others, worked with ICMA to develop the approach and survey questions. The survey went to ICMA members who are Asian Pacific and to members who serve a community with a significant APA population. Survey recipients were also encouraged to share the survey with colleagues.

In developing the messaging behind the survey, members noted that one of ICMA's Core Beliefs is to ensure that local governments and the association reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. According to the 2013 ICMA Membership Diversity Strategic Plan, less than 1% of ICMA's full members are Asian. The purpose of the survey was to (1) identify interest areas, needs and priorities of APA members in their role as leaders and professional managers in their communities and (2) to gauge interest and encourage participation in an ICMA affiliate group that will promote the local government profession to more APAs through professional development and networking opportunities at ICMA's annual conference and other events.

75 individuals responded to the survey for a response rate of 18%.

The highest priority efforts identified by the survey responders were:

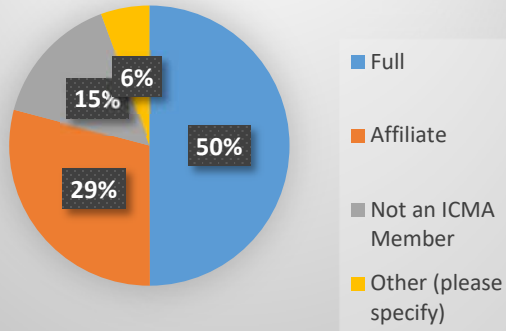
1. Networking events – introduce non-APA members and managers to APA individuals for purposes of developing cultural awareness, and offer APA members the opportunity to find individuals in similar circumstances.
2. Coaching/mentoring program – institute a method to match APA members and those managing communities with large numbers of APAs to individuals with similar backgrounds.
3. Diversity - Discussion of APA community issues and Identification of workplace impediments to diversity – Through online resources, events, and conference workshops, discuss issues that impact the APA community.

The primary method of communication should be through email (92.0%) on a quarterly basis (67.6%), and about half are interested in attending an annual conference (47.9%).

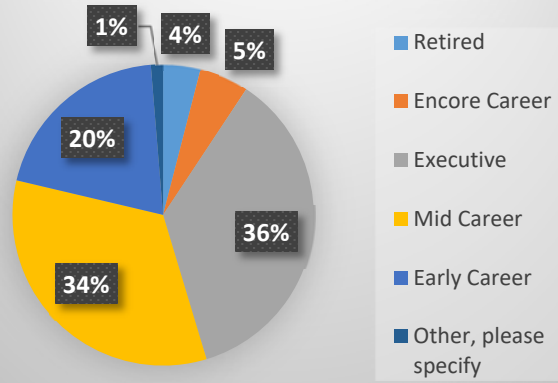
[Introduction](#)

The survey consisted of 10 questions: 4 collected demographic information while 6 were focused on gathering information about potential work and ideas that ICMA should undertake to address the APA professional community. It went to 336 individuals who either indicated they were Asian or Pacific American ICMA members or lived in communities where the Asian or Pacific American population based on available U.S. Census data was greater than 20%. Of those contacted, 75 participated in the survey (61 ICMA members) for a response rate of 18.2%.

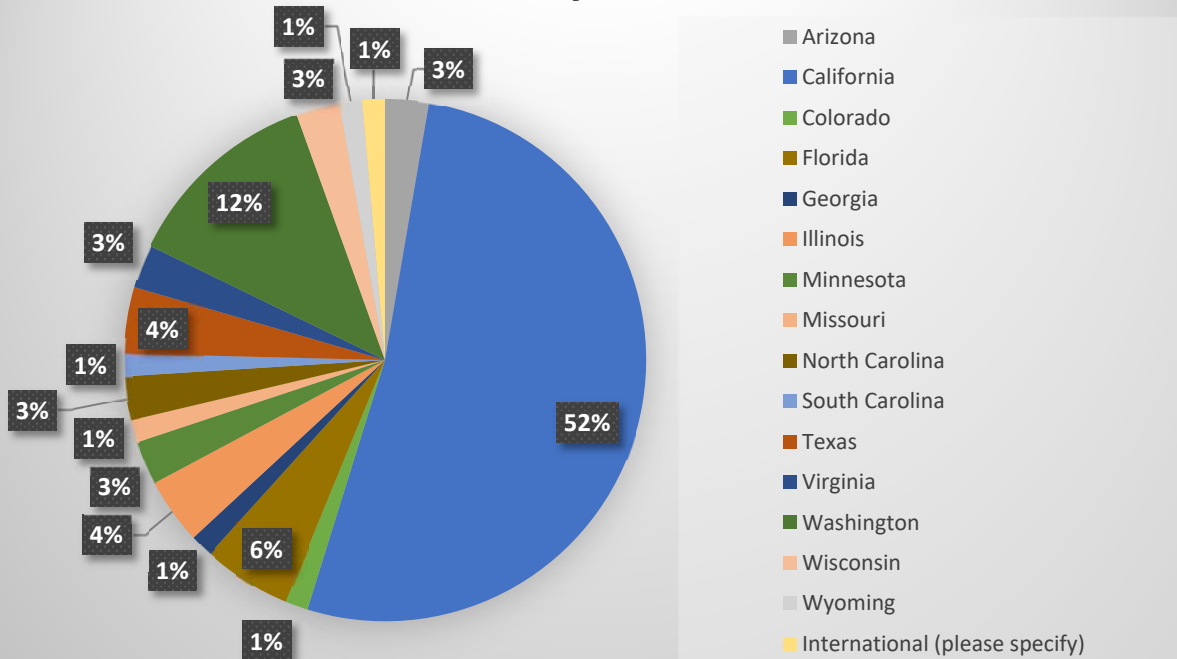
What is your ICMA membership status?



How would you describe your career stage?



Where do you live?

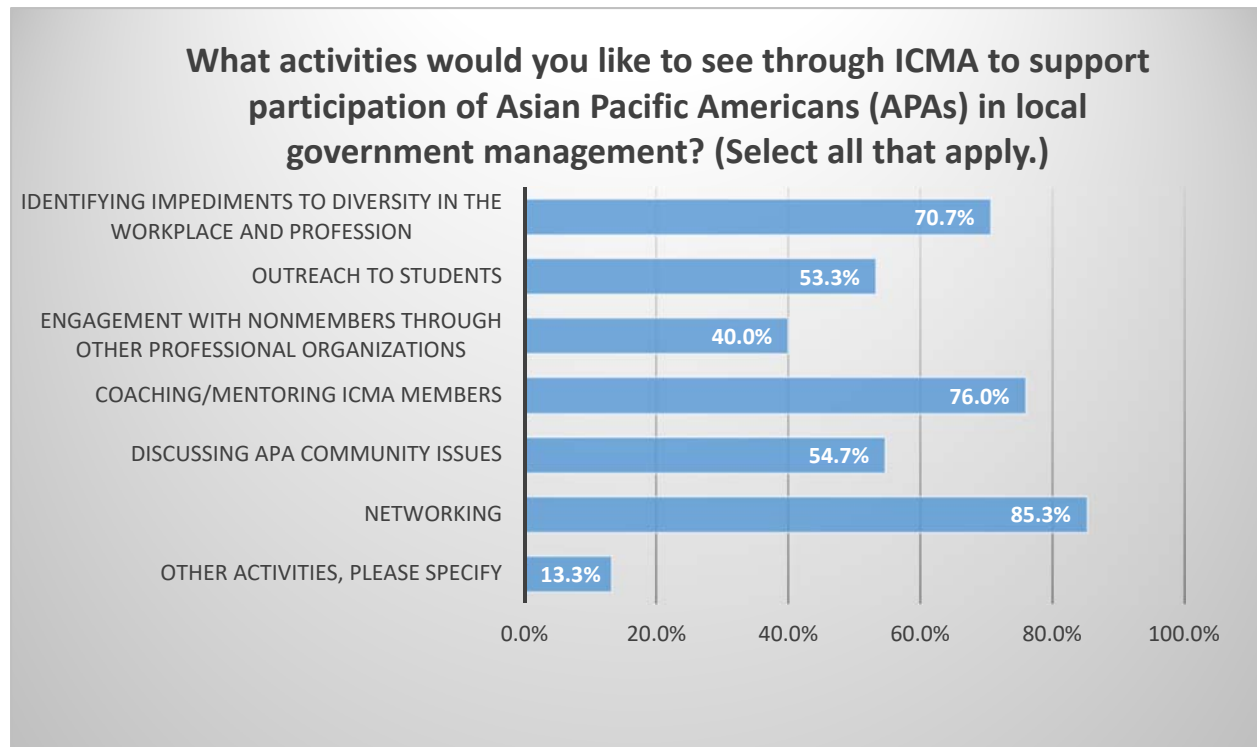


Demographics

Nine individuals also provided contact information in response to the question of whether they would like to be contacted to participate in APA activities.

[ICMA Activities for the APA Professionals](#)

The following chart provides the breakdown of which activities respondents would like ICMA to offer in support of the APA community, by level of support:



In response to the open ended option about what else ICMA should consider, respondents suggested:

- Providing support for APA women,
- Establishing online resources specific to the APA community, and
- Involving APA members in the international development work that ICMA conducts.
- Strengthening local networks,
- Recruiting APA individuals,

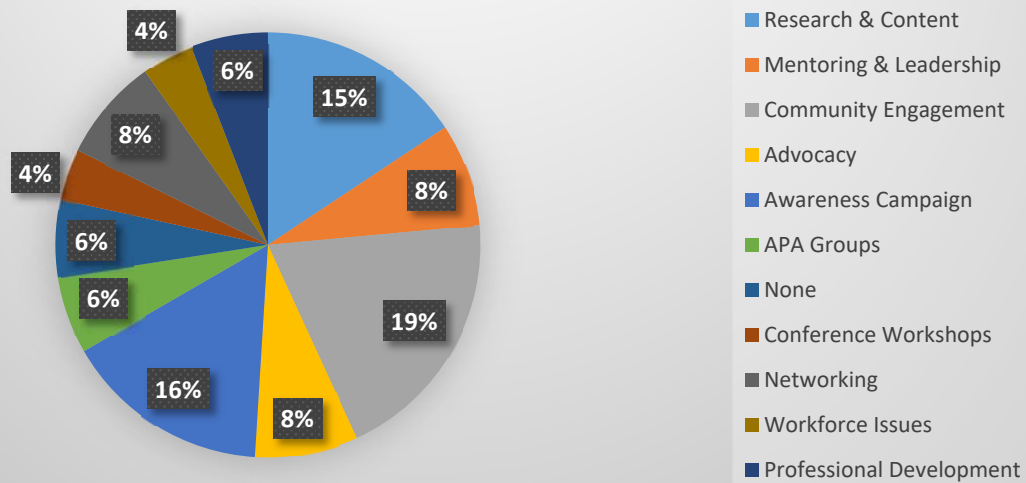
A full breakdown of the suggestions is available in the report appendix.

[ICMA Activities for Professionals Working in APA Communities](#)

In an open ended format question about what ICMA should offer professionals working in APA communities, 46 respondents offered suggestions which were categorized into 11 categories, displayed in the chart on the next page (unedited answers with categorizations are provided in the appendix).

The suggestions most frequently related to community engagement, awareness campaigns, and research and content.

What activities would you like to see through ICMA to serve the needs of local government managers in communities with a significant Asian Pacific American population?



POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES FOR AN APA GROUP

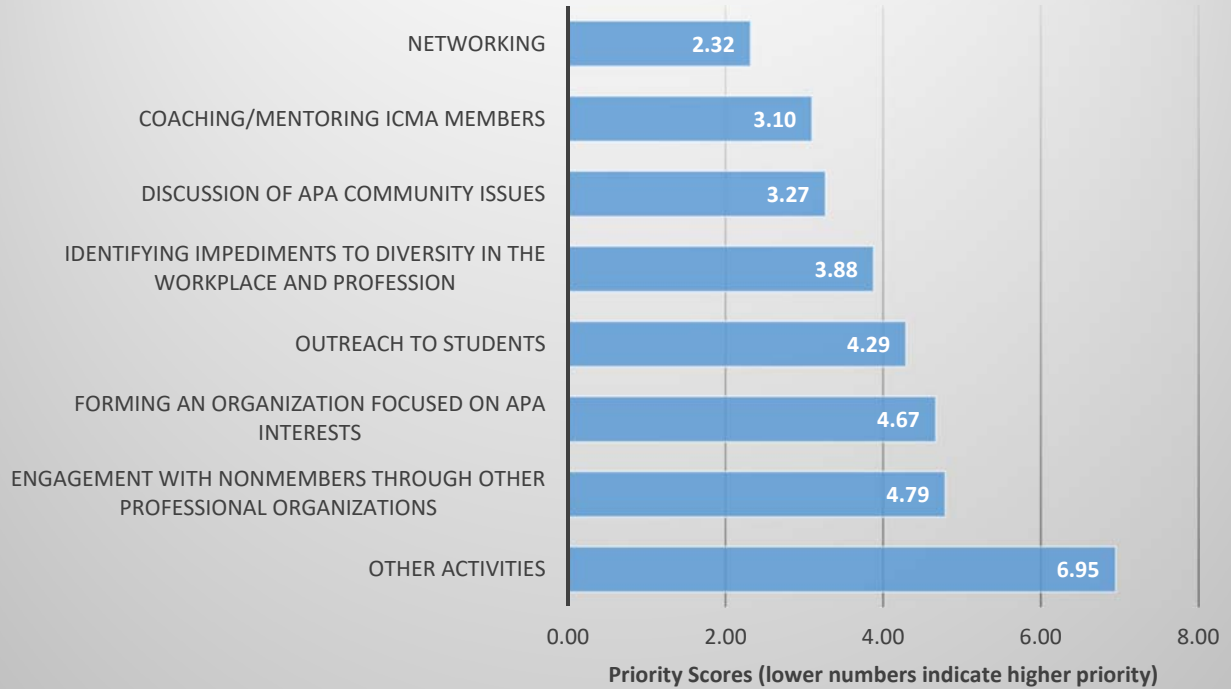
If an APA network is created in ICMA, respondents were asked to select and rank in order of priority activities of interest. The chart on the following page illustrates this, with lower values indicating a higher priority.

Not surprisingly for a professional association, networking was ranked as the #1 activity of interest. Coaching/mentoring, discussion of APA community issues, and addressing diversity and the lack thereof all were ranked pretty evenly. Not far behind were outreach to students, forming an actual organizations and engagement with other professional organizations followed.

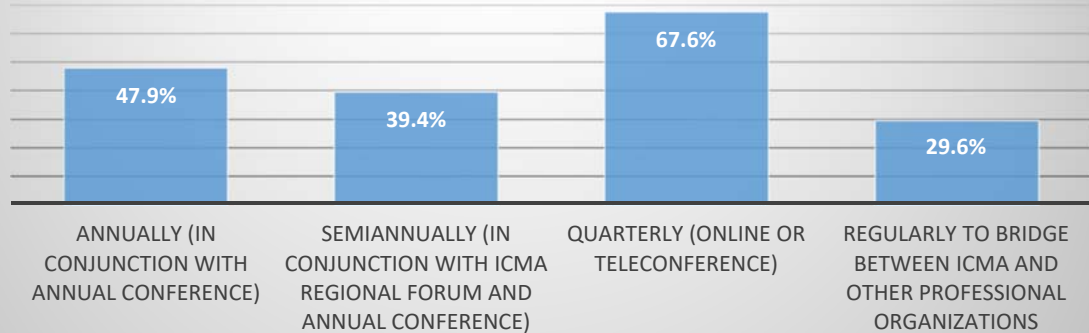
The priorities among all career stages were similar, with those in executive positions having a slightly higher interest in engagement with non-members through other professional organizations. Non-members were most interested in discussing APA community issues, and affiliate members were more interested in APA issues than in mentoring and coaching opportunities.

All other suggestions, which ranged from types of networking activities, to research and conference session suggestions are listed in the Appendix.

A number of ICMA members are interested in forming a network within ICMA with a focus on Asian Pacific American (APA) matters. In which of the following would you be interested in participating, and in what order of priority?



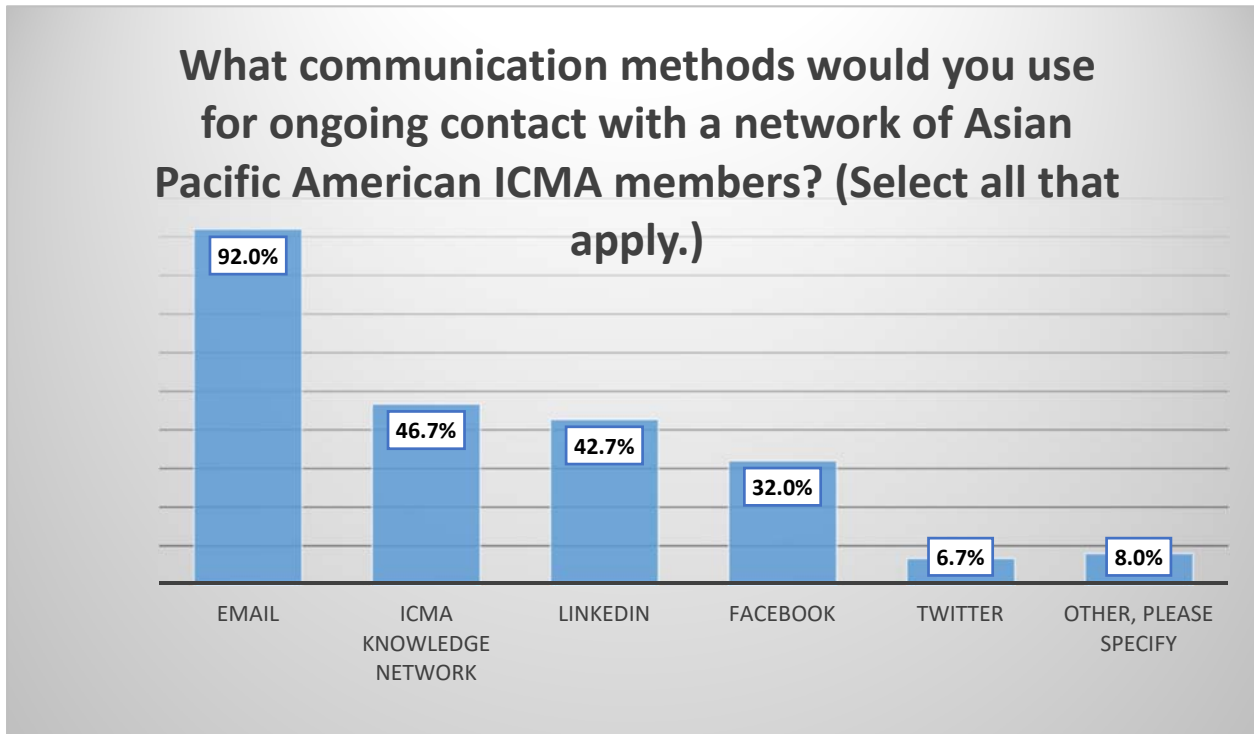
At what level do you believe you could actively participate? (Select all that apply.)



How and When Do You Want to Engage

With regard to the regularity of such meetings or exchanges, 67.6% of the survey respondents would opt for quarterly meetings online or via teleconference. 47.9% would actively try to attend conference sessions or seminars that focus on the APA community. Smaller percentages said they would actively attend regional forums or lesser activities intended to bridge the gap between ICMA offerings and the offerings of other professional organizations.

Clearly, respondents prefer email as the source of their contact with the potential network. ICMA's Knowledge Network and LinkedIn were the second most popular options.



Other Comments

When asked for other comments, 17 respondents chose to answer, with 6 providing statements of gratitude and encouragement of this effort. Other responses included such comments as "...knowledge of Asians is dominated by stereotypes," "this initiative should be led by APA members of ICMA with support from non-APA members. Non-APA members should not be leading discussions or initiatives on this topic but should be listening and supporting respectfully," and that "it may be beneficial to start at the state level." Other comments suggested that a member might attend conference if there were a session devoted to APA issues, and that ICMA should provide conference scholarships to some APA attendees for diversity purposes.

Appendix – Unedited Responses

Question 2- “What activities would you like to see through ICMA to support participation of Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) in local government management?” – Other Activities responses:

- Support for API women
- Get diverse candidates to run for office.
- Government should invest in their staff and send them to leadership development program like executive development Institute.
- Establish a resource bank of information to read, share and/or a vehicle to talk and connect (e.g., Slack)
- In the tradition of the mentorship and support that was provided the Black Public Administrators and the International Hispanic Network, future ICMA support for APA professional development
- What is Asian Pacific -- like half of the world with little commonality --
- A long time ago I believe there was an effort to organize a California-ICMA APA Ad-Hoc Committee (I was asked to participate in it once it materialized)-- but it never did. Even if it were to begin as a non-physical meeting, a platform for discussions based around 1. APAs in local government management and 2. Awareness initiatives for everyone to know about particular issues and concerns that may affect how we can effectively serve APA communities would be helpful.
- Get APA members involved in international work, especially in Asia
- Strengthening local networks, creating local chapters, outreaching to make ICMA's leadership more diverse with APIs (specifically, Southeast Asians), push for the disaggregation of API data (break down ethnic specific data - different ethnicities within APIs have different needs, challenges, and issues)
- Recruiting and retaining APA's, including woman into higher positions, i.e. Director and Executive Level

Question 3 – “What activities would you like to see through ICMA to serve the needs of local government managers in communities with a significant Asian Pacific American population?” responses with categorizations:

Comment	Categories
mentorship;	Mentoring and Leadership
Discussion of needs and trends along with engagement opportunities.	Research & Content
Provide resources to enlighten non-Asian managers that all Asians should not be lumped into one category. There are variations of culture depending upon where people originated from in the Far East.	Awareness Campaign
Community engagement, diversity, and inclusion are important issues. At the same time, it is important to understand that the Asian Pacific American population has the same goals and concerns of the majority of the population. They care about their communities and so it is key to recognize shared values and goals. Greater community engagement can also lead to more participation in local government by educating students and working	Community Engagement, Advocacy

professionals about the opportunities that local government offers. Whether you have a career in management, communications, finance, engineering, or recreation there are career opportunities in local government.	
Developing APA residents into government workforce	Workforce Issues
Get folks registered to vote. Get folks ready for citizenship. Get candidates to represent.	Community Engagement
Create a local government community platform for Knowledge and ideas sharing and crowd sourcing For problem solving and expert guidance	Research & Content
Development and support of APA affinity groups.	APA Groups
Focused discussion groups with city managers and community members to identify issues, with the opportunity to build out actions from those groups.	Research & Content
Campaign to teach about the need of involvement in local government. As these are not traditional career options for the people from this community.	Community Engagement, Advocacy
Connections to APA community and sector groups, i.e. community chambers, non-profit/community-based organizations	APA Groups, Networking
Policy changes in local government hiring at all professional hierarchies to reflect the populations they serve.	Workforce Issues
None.	None
Regular local chapter networking meetings/outings.	Mentoring & Leadership
Raise awareness on bamboo ceiling issues	Awareness Campaign
It would be good if ICMA could be part of simulating conversations about APA inclusion from a real, not superficial level.	Awareness Campaign
NA	None
Cultural awareness training. Asians typically do not self promote, consequently, much of society relies upon Asian serotypes	Cultural Awareness Training
Although that is not my situation (no large APA population) I would like to offer the suggestion of facilitating connections and community forums between government officials/managers and the APA communities, to find out about needs, opportunities to co-create mutual interest initiatives.	Mentoring & Leadership, Professional Development
Addressing the diverse issues facing those types of communities.	Research & Content
Networking	Networking
Putting together a local network of managers that could help each other deal with the unique issues that a large APA community faces.	Networking
Volunteer Project opportunities. Some of us work in communities with no strong need for APA outreach in their communities because of community demographics. Linking those individuals with cities that need assistance with APA outreach on a volunteer assignment (pro bono projects) could help connect APA members through community service. In particular, I'd like to see projects serving disadvantaged APA communities (minority/immigrant/refugee communities, perhaps in the Central Valley or other regions).	Community Engagement, Volunteering Efforts
Events to reach out to the Asian community.	Community Engagement
Share information about underlying and emerging APA issues with contextual background that might be helpful in full understanding.	Research & Content

I would like to see that when there are issues of significance to this population that they receive special attention; I would like to see my peers who are leaders highlighted and recognized (since there are so few of us) via articles, conference panels, etc.	Research & Content, Professional Development
How to do effective outreach to different Asian populations in areas like voting, vaccinations, smoking cessation, other health and safety.	Research & Content
Leadership development for mid level manager	Professional Development
none	None
Bilingual services	Community Engagement
Identification of major cultural characteristics that are either barriers to participation or on which program delivery could be strengthened.	Research & Content
Training on cultural competencies	Cultural Awareness Training
More sessions or discussions focused on equity and culturally appropriate delivery of services in government.	Awareness Campaign, Conference Workshops
Workshops for local government managers in understanding the needs of their communities -- a safe place for them to ask questions of others in the APA community.	Awareness Campaign, Conference Workshops
"Asian" is such a broad term encompassing many different ethnicities and cultures. We need a way to better understand our own cultural differences before we can expect non-Asians to do so. Networking and educational events would be a good place to start.	Cultural Awareness Training
Special topics or forums could be helpful; special articles in ICMA publications; webinars	Awareness Campaign
Raising awareness of government management career opportunities at APA events and active recruitment of APA candidates.	Advocacy for the
I don't think anything needs to be reinvented if things are just getting kicked off the ground; there are many existing organizations (that I can think of in California where I'm at), including student organizations, that already address many APA issues and concerns that public servants might benefit from being aware of. (For example, USC has an APA Social Work Caucus, and a School of Public Policy Asian Pacific Islander Caucus)	APA Groups, Networking
Some type of cultural overview so new managers understand some of the nuances of Asian populations especially recent immigrants.	Cultural Awareness Training
Help them during the time of crisis.	Mentoring & Leadership
ICMA can help promote APA representation in local government by initiating a campaign to progressively increase APA representation in leadership positions. For example, 2% representation for a community with 4% APA in the next 5 years and 4% in the next 10 years.	Advocacy
Making Asian communities understand the importance of government, government careers, government work, and how it is professionalized compared to Asian countries as a whole (a huge assumption). In India for instance (and arguably here in the States too) government jobs are thought	Community Engagement

of as easy, laid-back, not very productive, and corrupt. Immigrants come here with those same ideas in mind. In the little time, I've worked in local government (5 years across 3 different governments) that couldn't be farther from the truth.	
Disaggregation of ethnic data, promote more local government representation (leadership/executive roles) that is reflective of the population.	Awareness Campaign
Don't feel that APAs should be treated any different than any other race. However, there should be more education on the different populations. There should be better outreach and efforts. It would help for these populations to understand that there are Asians working in local governments also. Maybe have the Asian managers and employees reach out to the community through various forums, publications, etc.	Community Engagement, Awareness Campaign, Cultural Awareness Training
Engaging APA population to be engaged in the civic/public process	Community Engagement
Know and understand that Asians typically do not get involved in local government. They are typically raised not to cause a stir and so they stick to their own business. However, Asians are typically highly educated and have significant contributions to offer. It might be reaching out more to them so they understand city services and how they can contribute to the cities they live in. Because many Asians come here as immigrants, they don't know much about civic service. They might be willing to perform civic service once they understand it and get better acclimated to the community. Asians are an untapped resource for every community.	Community Engagement

Question 4 – “A number of ICMA members are interested in forming a network within ICMA with a focus on Asian Pacific American (APA) matters. In which of the following would you be interested in participating, and in what order of priority?” Chart:

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Other activities	2	0	0	0	0	2	4	13	17	6.95	38
Engagement with nonmembers through other professional organizations	1	5	11	8	10	9	11	2	3	4.79	60
Forming an organization focused on APA interests	6	5	5	10	8	8	16	0	4	4.67	62
Outreach to students	2	9	13	7	10	9	6	2	3	4.29	61
Identifying impediments to diversity in the workplace and profession	10	10	10	10	7	9	5	3	0	3.88	64
Discussion of APA community issues	12	14	8	11	12	4	2	0	1	3.27	64
Coaching/mentoring ICMA members	9	21	13	4	4	7	3	0	2	3.10	63
Networking	30	8	10	8	2	2	2	0	1	2.32	63

Question 5 – “With regard to question 4, what other activities would you want to participate in?”

- Governing for racial equity.
- 01/03/2016
- I am retired and not living on the west coast; however, I like to stay informed.
- I would like to participate in the coaching/mentoring ICMA members, networking, outreach to students, and diversity issues.
- All if available.
- Social occasions
- Already participate in community issues and networking groups.

- my 1,2,3
- See question 3
- I might participate in all of the listed activities.
- Seminars and workshops
- NA
- Social events (ties to networking) that are connected to APA interests (plays; museum exhibits) OR creating venues, workshops, dialogues.
- IDing impediments to diversity, student outreach, discussion of community issues.
- Identifying impediments to diversity in the workplace and profession
- Identifying impediments and outreach to students
- N/A
- I would like to learn why so few Asians are interested in Exec leadership roles in local govt? Can ICMA study this issue and learn some root causes? Are there cultural reasons at play? I have some assumptions, but it would be helpful to learn if there are any research data available.
- Local government best practices
- none
- Outreach
- I would participate in any of the above.
- Unknown at this time
- ICMA should take advantage of working with other professional organizations by participating in their career fairs to let Asians know about the careers available in the public sector. For example, NAAAP AAJA are holding their annual conventions at the same time in Vegas with a huge career fair and anticipate over 3,000 attendees. That would be a great audience for ICMA to reach.
- Since it's so difficult to get people together geographically, could we do more skype or google chrome type of group meetings over the web? It would be easier to regular quarterly meetings this way to get people across the country.
- As a white woman, I am interested in joining with ICMA members to increasing recruitment, retention and promotion of managers who reflect the demographics in San Jose, Bay Area and CA.
- I enjoy the continuing education ICMA provides as well as the opportunity to network with colleagues.
- As listed in item 4.
- Promote professional management practice in Asian cities through international contract work and other opportunities
- ICMA conferences rarely have sessions that discuss the needs of APIs or address the lack of an active API professional chapter (ie. IHN)
- Leadership development. APAs are not always given the opportunity to become a leader within the organization. They are not always given the opportunity to participate in leadership development training and programs. Yet, the skills of APAs are just as high as any other race. Work ethic is strong in this group.

Question 10 – “Other Comments?”:

- I have been a member for over 40 years. I am happy to see some interest in APA issues.

- Referred by Asian Pacific Directors Coalition in Seattle.
- NA
- I am half Korean and native to South Korea. U.S. Asians are diverse and knowledge of Asians is dominated by stereotypes
- Thank you very much!
- I think this initiative should be led by APA members of ICMA with support from non-APA members. Non-APA members should not be leading discussions or initiatives on this topic but should be listening and supporting respectfully. I see this happening with #13percent initiatives, too -- the conversation gets dominated by others and the people who really need to be paying attention either don't participate or miss the point entirely and perpetuate the problem.
- While I would one day like to serve in area near my hometown (which has a significant Asian American population), I am currently gaining experience in a city where there is little diversity beyond Caucasian/African Americans. To locals, that makes me even more of an outsider, regardless of my education or experience. I know a lot of students that may be looking to go into local government may have to face issues like this, and I think this organization can help members transition to an area where there may be 'culture shock'. While I am grateful for the support from ICMA and its members regarding educational interests and opportunities to gain experience, support in this area could only improve your outreach.
- Thank you for working on this.
- Thank you ICMA for supporting current and future APA members!!!
- this community has over 74 primary languages -- many are Asian-pacific -- again it would be hard to see correlations between Tonga, Korean, Chinese, Hawaii, Formosan, Japanese and many of the other groups -- there is such a healthy diversity and non segregated interplay
- I am not Asian Pacific, but our community has a large and active Asian Pacific component.
- It would be great if resources (e.g. scholarships) were provided for attendance at the annual conference
- I recently joined ICMA (less than a year) after returning to work as a public management consultant (after raising kids). I have not considered attending an ICMA conference, but I would likely consider it if there was an APA networking event at it.
- Thanks for putting this together!
- I believe in the benefit of cross cultural alliances such as Asian Americans for #BlackLivesMatter and Showing Up for Racial Justice. One resource that I find valuable is DiversityInc. I would like to see more local, state and federal organizations join DiversityInc. Perhaps ICMA might consider joining and then the weekly content could be shared with members.
- It's great that this is being addressed again. I remember being asked to participate back in 2009 but nothing really materialized.
- I think this effort is great. I think it may be beneficial to start at the state level. I'm sure there is a strong contingent of administrators/managers in California, but they might not be as strong in other states. I think it's important for those in the state level to support each other and encourage other Asians to consider the profession. In Illinois, I can only think of one other Asian that is in city management. Many Asians at a young age are encouraged to go into the medical field and never are aware of city management as a career. Building this at the state level would help that tremendously. ICMA doing something similar on how they are reaching out to Latinos and African Americans for the Asian communities would help tremendously.