



# LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT

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The goal of [ICMA's Student Chapter Program](#) is to introduce and integrate students into the local government management profession and familiarize them with members, resources, and the ICMA Code of Ethics. As a part of ICMA's Next Generation Initiatives, chapters exist to establish connections between ICMA, schools, students, state associations, and managers.

Content and program activities are a partnership between ICMA and the colleges/universities. ICMA strives to create program content that engages and excites current MPA/MPP students about the profession of city/county management. Through our student chapters, we also hope to attract undergraduate students who are interested in public service, but may not be aware of career possibilities in local government.

Chapters develop their own charter, hold regular meetings, engage guest presenters, and engage with other chapters. Students also use the chapters as a way to take advantage of joint research/presentation opportunities and attend ICMA conferences.



- **What you need**

Starting a student chapter is easy. If you aren't willing to serve as the president yourself, find someone who is willing to take on the responsibility. Then, you must solicit an MPA professor or program director to act as your chapter's faculty advisor. After securing an advisor, solicit a local government professional in your area (ideally an ICMA member interested in shared responsibility for the success of the chapter) to act as the chapter mentor. If your search for a mentor in your area is unsuccessful, contact ICMA for assistance. Completing and submitting the student chapter agreement is the final step in the process.

- **Establishment fees**

There is no chapter-establishment fee. Once established, all chapter members will be eligible for free student memberships. The university is entitled to one academic membership, which is reserved for the chapter advisor. Student chapter mentors do not receive free membership to ICMA for their service, although we highly recommend they consider joining.

- **Chapter setup**

Upon establishment, chapters will receive ICMA-branded chapter logos, a chapter establishment certificate, and a special join code for student members. Those who use the code to join will receive all member benefits, including online PM Magazine access, complimentary registration to the ICMA Annual Conference, and access to all member-specific content at [icma.org](http://icma.org).

New chapters must submit a brief description of their chapter for their chapter profile.

- **Strategic plan**

Consider developing a strategic plan for the chapter. Some of the most successful chapters attribute that success to a commitment to a strategic plan. It may be a tedious process, but it will come in handy, especially during leadership transitions. Be sure the plan will get the chapter through at least one leadership transition. It will help guide the next board and will give them time to get in the swing of things before they must develop a plan of their own.

It's okay to be ambitious in your plan, but it's important to be realistic too. Set goals that will push your chapter, but won't knock it down if they aren't achieved.





## By submitting a Student Chapter Agreement to ICMA, chapters agree to:

- Remain active as an official ICMA Student Chapter, or face termination.
- Ensure our chapter members successfully join ICMA.
- Develop a charter for our chapter and submit to ICMA within a reasonable amount of time after initial assembly.
- Appoint an official chapter faculty advisor (an administrator or lecturer/professor from the school).
- Appoint an official chapter mentor in the profession.
- Acknowledge that our chapter includes one complimentary academic membership.
- Form a core chapter leadership group from among the student body.
- Communicate any issues to ICMA in a timely manner, if assistance is needed.
- Forward or otherwise distribute communications from ICMA to our student membership.
- Submit an annual summary (1-2 pages) detailing our activities and accomplishments for posting on the ICMA website at the end of our academic year.



One of the goals of the ICMA Student Chapter Program is to attract students to the local government profession. Although student chapters primarily attract students in MPA programs, any student can be a member. We recommend using the following tools and events to educate others about local government and/or your student chapter:

- **Recruitment emails**
- **Organizational fairs**
- **Meetings for other student organizations**
- **Flyers**
- **Promotional videos**
- **Visits to classes in other disciplines**
- **Schoolwide events (welcome events, gameday celebrations, etc.)**



## Sample Recruitment Email

*(Insert Greeting),*

*[Insert school name] is forming an ICMA Student Chapter!*

*ICMA is the leading association of local government professionals dedicated to creating and supporting thriving communities throughout the world. With its more than 11,000 members internationally, ICMA works to improve the lives of citizens by identifying, promoting, and speeding the adoption of leading government practices.*

*As members, each of our students will receive a free full membership and all the benefits of a full ICMA membership. Those benefits include:*

- *Free registration for the ICMA Annual Conference*
- *Access to ICMA's Who's Who professional network & Job Center*
- *Full digital membership, including ICMA's Newsletter, PM Magazine Online, members-only files, and content (such as the Job Hunting Handbook and Leading Ideas interviews)*
- *Exclusive webinars and podcasts*
- *Mentorship from a local area government professional*

*In exchange for their membership, members organize events and initiatives that contribute to the growth and success of their school, city, and county communities, promote the local government profession, and offer career development and networking opportunities to future government professionals.*

*We believe that you could be an integral part of [insert school name]'s ICMA Student Chapter and would like to invite you to join. For more information, please contact [insert contact information].*

*Best Wishes*



After recruiting new members, be sure to send them an email providing them with information about the chapter, the chapter meeting schedule, and instructions for becoming an official member of ICMA. Use the sample below to help you create your own.

## **Sample Welcome Email**

*(INSERT GREETING),*

*Welcome to the (INSERT SCHOOL NAME) ICMA Student Chapter!*

*Now that you are a member, you can attend meetings, help organize events and initiatives, and access ICMA resources. To register with our chapter please go to [ICMA.org](https://www.icma.org) and follow the attached join instructions. Upon completing the registration process, you will receive a confirmation email and will have full access to the resources on the ICMA website. Please email me to let me know so I can keep a record of our members. This record will help with our renewal process next year.*

*You will now also have access to the ICMA Student Chapter Facebook Group, another excellent resource and a way to network with other student chapter members internationally. Please join and feel free to like, comment, and share as much as you would like.*

*I will send out an email soon with the details of our next chapter meeting. I look forward to meeting you there and discussing future chapter plans.*

*Again, Welcome. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions before the next meeting. I look forward to working with you this year.*

*Best Wishes*



# CONNECTING WITH YOUR STATE

ICMA works with a number of state-based associations for local government professionals to promote the highest ethical standards of professional behavior, provide professional development opportunities, and gather and share information to city and county leaders. Contact your state's association for partnership and scholarship opportunities, information on state events, and access to some of the state's leading public administrators. If possible, try to attend state meetings and conferences. They are invaluable opportunities to network with public service professionals in your state and helps demonstrate the need for state associations to develop programming that engages upcoming professionals.

You can find a [state association list](#) with links to official websites and a directory with [leadership and liaison contact information](#) on the ICMA website.



The key to successful student chapter event planning is delegation. After deciding on a specific event and/or guest speaker, be sure to divvy up the responsibilities equally among board members. Most events will require everyone's help. List out each required task and assign responsibility for each to an individual. Secure a speaker. Collaborate with like organizations. Reserve a space. Develop a social media and marketing plan. Designate a set-up/cleanup crew.

Don't be afraid to start small with events (ex: one speaker instead of a full panel) and to spend time planning a small number of well-executed events per semester instead of a large number of forgettable ones. Quantity does not outweigh quality in this case. It's all about what your chapter's board can handle and the sooner you all figure that out, the better.

See the list below for potential chapter events and initiatives and the [Events & Initiatives Guide](#) for more events and more details.

Discussion panel  
Lunch and learn  
Case challenge  
Government building tour  
Group field project  
Career skills workshop  
Speed coaching  
Webinar viewings  
Public service conferences





## ICMA Annual Conference

The ICMA Annual Conference is the largest gathering of local government professionals in the world. It presents professionals and students with the opportunity to attend sessions, discussions, and demonstrations on developments and prominent and emerging issues in the local government and to expand their networks alongside individuals at every stage of their careers.

As members of ICMA, student chapter members receive free registration to the ICMA Annual Conference! ICMA also provides multiple opportunities for additional funds for travel and lodging including the Stene Scholarship and the Best Chapter Event Contest. Information on how to be considered for scholarship opportunities and contests can be found on [ICMA.org](http://ICMA.org).

The conference includes special sessions and events for students and student chapter members, including the largest student chapter meeting of the year with chapters from across the nation.

## ICMA Regional Conferences

The ICMA Regional Conferences are a series of gatherings hosted in each of ICMA's five regions: Midwest, Mountain Plains, Northeast, Southeast, West Coast. They exist to present some of the same opportunities provided to members at the ICMA Annual Conference, but with smaller regional audiences.

Scholarships are offered to a select number of student chapter members every year to attend the regional conference of their choice. Rules for qualification for the scholarships are announced on social media and through email and are also made available on [ICMA.org](http://ICMA.org).

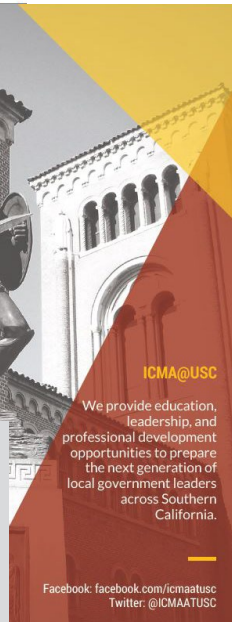
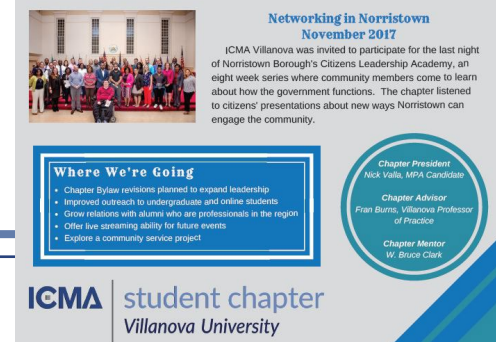
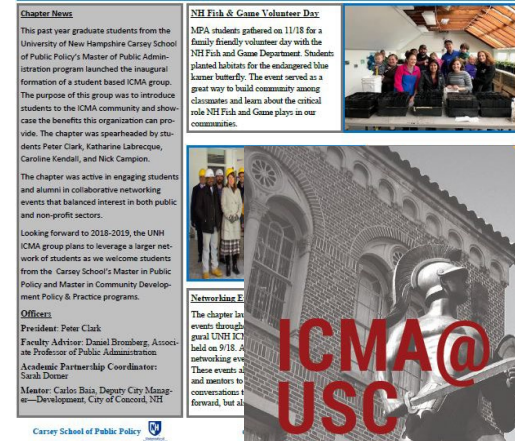
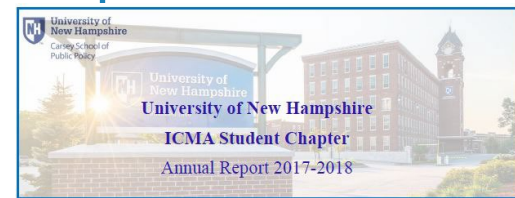


ICMA requires that each student chapter submit an annual report to ICMA at the end of every spring semester. There is no required format, so be creative! Each report should include the following information:

- Chapter news: In this section, include any information that the chapter would like to share with ICMA. Did you collaborate with another chapter? Has there been a significant increase in members? Have any new collaborations or partnerships developed? Any new chapter officials?
- Three highlights: Give brief descriptions of what your chapter has chosen as a highlights of the year (events, activities, initiatives, etc.). Tell why the chapter feels they were successes and what you all learned from them. Be sure to include dates as well.
- At least two photos
- A look forward: Describe any plans that your chapter has for the next semester or next year. Talk about in events that are already being planned, any coming changes in officials, and describe the chapter's overall outlook on the coming semester/year.
- List of chapter officials

Each of these sections can be as brief or as long as you would like. Be sure to include everything that your chapter deems is important.

You may view past [annual reports](#) and a [guide to creating your own report](#) that includes format ideas online.



ICMA Student Chapters are living, breathing organizations. They need nurturing and maintenance. Use the following tips to make sure your chapter remains sustainable.

- **Develop a chapter charter and bylaws.**
- **Establish an ICMA Student Chapter board.** Each seat in the board should be important and duties should be established upfront. This creates buy-in among everyone on the board. Collaborative leadership will be key.
- **Draft a strategic plan.** Some of the most successful chapters attribute that success to a commitment to a strategic plan. It may be a tedious process, but it will come in handy, especially during leadership transitions.
  - Be sure the plan will get the chapter through at least one leadership transition. It will help guide the next board and will give them time to get in the swing of things before they must develop a plan of their own.
  - It's okay to be ambitious in your plan, but it's important to be realistic too. Set goals that will push your chapter, but won't knock it down if they aren't achieved.
- **Tap into any funds that are available to student organizations from your school.** It's free money! You can also work with your university to find out if there are any other ways to access funding for student organizations.
- **Build your chapter's relationship with its mentor.** Oftentimes individuals that have agreed to mentor are active members of ICMA. Get that relationship going. You will need their advice, their connections, and their influence.

- Is local government management an afterthought in your program? This is quite common. **In the past, chapters have worked with the deans of their colleges to use chapter activities to fill the local government gaps in the curriculum.**
- **Find ICMA student members on campus. Do your best to get them involved with the student chapter.** Don't be afraid to use the free membership as one of your selling points.
- **Reach out to program and chapter alumni.** Let them know you welcome any help they are willing to offer. Note: Using alumni as speakers at events is a good way to engage them and mitigate costs for the chapter.
  - There are other creative ways to involve chapter and program alumni. Chapters have opted to create alumni boards that advise them. These boards can be involved in the selection of board members as well.
- **Reach out to your state association.** These organizations are great resources for funding, partnerships, scholarships, ideas, etc.
  - Try to organize networking/coaching sessions with association members, chapter members, and other students in your program.
  - Propose initiatives/events that benefit association members and students.
- **Partner with chapters at other schools.** Joint initiatives and events are among some of the most successful chapter events. If you aren't located near another university with a chapter, you can always reach out for ideas and advice.



- **Never underestimate the power of word of mouth.** It's free. And it works. Most of your future members don't even know your chapter exists yet.
- **Get as much visibility as possible on and off campus.** (Local events included.)
- **Celebrate small successes.** They are successes, nonetheless and usually aren't as small as they seem.
- **Focus on the general public too.** Your student body is important, but events do not always have to be student-only and efforts do not always have to be student-focused.
- **Use events for multiple purposes.** Recruit. Educate. Collaborate. Sometimes you can do it all in one event.
- **Use topics and issues discussed in your classes as themes for panels and other events.** This is a foolproof way to get support from students in your program who are not members of the student chapter.
- **Include your online students in your chapter.** They're students too! Not including them in planning, events, etc. can be a big mistake. Find ways for them to contribute and make sure they are just as committed as students who take classes on-campus.
- **Don't be afraid of the more traditional student organization events.** Study sessions, resume reviews, panels, etc. work. Don't be afraid to organize events like this with or without your chapter's own spin.





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