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Planning for the Next Generation of State and Local Government Employees







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Exercise Caution With Creative Workarounds

Bending the Rules Can Have Ethical Implications

BY KEVIN DUGGAN, ICMA-CM

No doubt we have all encountered

organizational rules, policies, and procedures that we believe are unnecessary, cumbersome, inefficient, or unfair. And we certainly have a lot of policies and regulations in government recognizing that because public resources are at play there will be heightened scrutiny as we undertake our work on behalf of the public.

When we encounter a rule, policy, or procedure that we don't agree with, or don't think is reasonably applicable to the circumstances we are dealing with, it is often tempting to try to find a creative way to achieve our intended goal while "working around" the organizational constraint. Oftentimes, there may well be a creative alternative to achieve the desired outcome.

Achieving a goal through an alternative means is not in and of itself problematic. However, is there a risk of being a bit too creative? Can we inadvertently stray into unethical conduct as we attempt to achieve what we believe is an appropriate and reasonable outcome?



Recent news reports concern a questionable practice undertaken by a federal government official where

creativity, even if it was pursued for a good reason, went too far. A USA Today article, "Report: Pentagon Gave \$280K in Bogus Pay," tells of a senior Pentagon human resources official who authorized what were described as "fraudulent bonuses" (\$40,000 each) to officials in her agency.

Early retirement buyout incentives were in place and could be authorized by this senior HR official for a large number of non-senior officials. These same incentives were available to senior staff as well, but required a higher level of authorization (by the undersecretary of defense). However, the process of getting this higher-level approval was described as "onerous" and "slow."

The HR official in question described the situation as follows: "The juice ain't worth the squeeze on this." She developed what she believed was a creative workaround to this issue, advising retiring senior staff members to downgrade their positions for one pay period in order to allow them to qualify for her approval of the incentive.

However, once this approach became known, it resulted in a two-year investigation by the inspector general's office that involved 16 witnesses and the review of 31,000 emails. The HR official in question justified her actions by saying she believed "she was acting legally and



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ICMA

International City/County **Management Association**

icma.org

June 2019

Public Management (PM) (USPS: 449-300) is published monthly except February by ICMA (the International City/ County Management Association) at 777 North Capitol Street. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4201. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. The opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ICMA.

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REPRINTS: To order article reprints or request reprint

SUBSCRIPTIONS: U.S. subscription rate, \$46 per year; other countries subscription rate, \$155 per year. Printed in the United States Contact: 202/289-4262; subscriptions@icma.org.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Public Management, ICMA, 777 N. Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201.

ARTICLE PROPOSALS: Visit icma.org/pm to see "Editorial Guidelines" for contributors.

For more information on local government leadership and management topics, visit icma.org.

Public Management (PM)

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777 North Capitol Street, N.E. Washington, DC 20002-4201

FDITORIAL OFFICE: pm@icma.org

ADVERTISING SALES:

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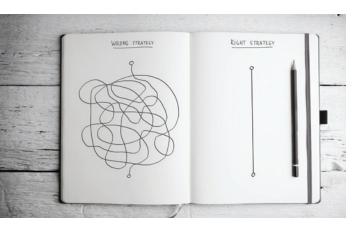
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Public Management (PM) aims to inspire innovation, inform decision making, connect leading-edge thinking to everyday challenges, and serve ICMA members and local governments in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world.



that there was no law or policy that prohibited her from temporarily downgrading senior officials to hasten their buyout packages." Additionally, she reported that she had conducted similar downgrades at another government agency and that other employees told her the process was "not prohibited."

However, the article interviewed subject-matter experts who variously described the conduct as "gross mismanagement," "improper use of government resources," and a "shell game." While this HR official is still employed at the Pentagon (apparently not in her former position), final disposition of this issue is ongoing; at a minimum, this official's career and reputation have been irreparably damaged.

Ethical Lessons Learned

This example offers some clear ethical lessons:

· Even if your intent is to achieve an authorized and appropriate outcome, how you achieve that outcome is critical. It is not only important that the goal you are attempting to achieve is consistent with policy intent, but also that the techniques you use to achieve the goal are consistent with organizational expectations and values.

- Avoid the temptation to conclude that something is OK simply because there is no rule against it. Our employers, including the public, have higher expectations of us in regard to our conduct and the use of public resources than simply those covered explicitly by a law, rule, or regulation.
- One of the most discredited, but still often cited, rationales for questionable behavior is "other people have done it or are doing it." We all need to be responsible for determining the appropriateness of our own conduct, not setting the bar based on examples we can find in others.
- Always measure a potential action based on the assumption that it will be made public. Are you comfortable taking the action even if you knew it would eventually become public knowledge? When working for the public, assume that anything you do will.
- When evaluating a potential action to take, consider all the various stakeholders that legitimately can weigh in on the appropriateness of your action. Those other than yourself or your immediate coworkers will likely judge your actions. Could other stakeholders possibly reach a different conclusion regarding the correctness of your conduct?

The constraints of working in the public sector, and with public resources, can often seem (and may often be) time-consuming and even onerous. While it is appropriate to attempt to work creatively within those restrictions to achieve goals efficiently, it requires careful consideration regarding when creativity can transition into inappropriate conduct.

The next time you are frustrated by a procedure or regulation, thoughtfully reflect on what is the reasonable level of creativity you can use to address the challenge. PA

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Managers who carefully tend to their governing bodies will harvest the rewards of good governance.

BY MIKE CONDUFF, ICMA-CM

The story of Water the Bamboo

as told by author Greg Bell at the 2018 ICMA Annual Conference in Baltimore was equally familiar and inspiring. Familiar because it is the life work of so many professional city and county managers, and inspiring both because Bell is a great storyteller (originally from Texas!) and also because it is what we all aspire to do for our governing bodies.

In case you missed it, the concept is that the giant timber bamboo farmer tends the bamboo year after year, planting, nurturing, watering, fertilizing, and weeding when necessary, all without much in the way



of visible results or reinforcement for the effort. As a reward for this faithfulness, the bamboo sprouts and grows prodigiously, making all the work and wait and worry worthwhile in a bountiful harvest.

If this sounds like the story of your council, then you understand the sense of familiarity.

Year after year, great professional local government managers nurture their governing bodies. They welcome them as newly elected officials, meet with them often, and go with them to training at the National League of Cities or the National Association of Counties and, of course, to their state conferences. They provide leadership summits or retreats to help sharpen their vision. They make available the latest tools and efficiencies. They educate, acculturate, moderate, and, when appropriate, **>>** accommodate. Ideally, at some point, the governing body THE BAMBOO reaches its potential and leads **SPROUTS** prodigiously. The community **AND GROWS** harvests the rewards of good

MAKING ALL THE None of this happens by accident. Just as each bamboo **WORK AND WAIT** field is different, so, too, are **AND WORRY** groups of elected officials. It is **WORTHWHILE** up to city or county managers IN A BOUNTIFUL to assess the capacity of their HARVEST. governing body and enhance it where possible, sometimes knowing it may be years before the harvest is realized. They take a long view of success.

Cultivating Persistence

governance.

As a long-time facilitator, I am blessed to observe and assist many of these managers as they cultivate in this governance arena. It is especially rewarding to be with them year after year as they water the bamboo field of their own professional development, the field of their staff effectiveness, and the field of the city, town, or county elected officials.

In his talk, Bell told us that bamboo roots grow over a hundred yards, and like those roots, so much of the effort expended by appointed leaders remains unseen by most. The best of these folks invest in the capacity of their council year after year after year

even when faced with change, either from the ballot box, term limits, or circumstance.

They are patient, recognizing that all of the breakfasts and lunches with newly electeds to help educate them may not pay back immediately. They are persistent and hold to their values and ethics in the face of the pressure of immediacy and instant gratification. And they are courageous: They give the council the credit for successes and accept the criticisms when thing go awry.

If this sounds like you, then you understand the inspiring part!

Growing Strong Roots

PRODIGIOUSLY.

A long-tenured manager I know is watching his seven-member council with a collective term in office of well over 50 years transition to less than a dozen collective years due to term limits. Another

> with a nine-member council has no members at all left from when she was hired. A third just saw his most tenured member resign for health reasons. In each case these managers are taking the long view and continuing to invest in training for the group remaining and those coming on. They may need to adjust the pace and process but do not despair or neglect the effort.

I am also fortunate to be able to coach and counsel elected officials throughout the year. Because coaches are typically familiar with the communities and circumstances but have no stake beyond helping them be successful, we can listen, inquire, nudge,

and even challenge, helping the governance roots grow stronger. Making this resource available to elected officials is just one more part of the nurturing role managers play.

If you want to incorporate the lessons of the bamboo for your governing body, remember that good governance does not happen by accident. You must:

- Understand and utilize the communication preferences of each elected official.
- Invest in developing your relationship with all of them.
- Facilitate their individual and collective skill enhancement.
- Provide a leadership summit or retreat (at least annually).
- Implement their collective vision for the community. PM



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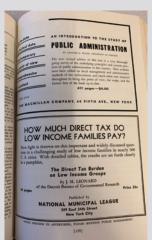
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 $PM\ magazine$ in the 1940s focused on a variety of topics of that era, including post-war rebuilding, war workers, and public war housing. In an article adapted from an address given at the 30th ICMA Annual Conference in Chicago, titled "Some Observations on American City Management," Arthur Collins shares his perspective as a public servant in Great Britain. He writes about the growth of careers in public service stating, "Since I was in the states for the first time, over 25 years ago now, it has pleased me to see that the public service has more and more proved itself as a career, with experience gathered from city to city, beginning at the foot of the ladder and climbing up to the biggest jobs in the greatest cities and counties. In this evolution, the profession of city managers has led the way." He concludes by writing, "By the time I may be addressing you again, I trust I may look out on the faces of more men and women who have made public service their career, who are assured by law of retirement allowance, who are as proud as they are today of their code of ethics, and who are respected by the public they serve..."

In the April 1943 issue, under "What American Cities Are Doing" the problems that local governments were tackling become evident.







In a bulletin titled, "Canteen for Children of War Workers," the author announced that Detroit had opened a children's canteen to provide afterschool and Saturday care for 6-to-12-year-olds whose mothers worked in the war plants. It read, "Boy and Girl Scouts will meet the youngsters at the close of school and escort them to the canteen where they will be entertained with games, gymnastics and story-telling and given a hot supper." It also stated that the charge for the children attending the canteen all week, including Saturday, would amount to \$2.50.







Why the Professional Development Path Leads to Success

It might be a surprise to see an article on learning and the human brain begin with a quote from Henry Ford, but he was quite predictive when it came to his views on continued professional development: "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.'

Most of us spend the first 18 years of our lives attending school. But after the formal part of our education is concluded, we risk placing learning on the back burner. Carving out time for professional development becomes more challenging as we advance in our careers and build our personal lives.

As part of a busy public sector workforce, we find it's not easy to steer one's mind into a learning mindset. Local government managers struggle with this every day. But it wasn't always this way.

Careers are based, initially, on the gathering of a level of expertise. Early in one's career, learning takes place at an extraordinary pace, and we find that we are recognized and promoted

BY **PATRICK MALONE**

for our technical proficiency. Our established knowledge base is comfortable and consistent. And this is exactly the way the human brain likes it: predictable.

But what happens when things change? We get promoted. There's an organizational shake-up. What happens when what we know isn't enough to address the complexity of today's world? Hence the need to revisit the learning mind.

The Brain Connection

The key to unleashing the learning mind is to first understand the human brain. This amazing organ weighs in at about three pounds and is almost 80 percent comprised of water. It is a complex web of 86 billion nerve cells (neurons), known as the gray matter, and billions of nerve fibers (axons and dendrites), the white matter. It is the fattiest organ in the body and its blood vessels stretched end-to-end would almost reach 100,000 miles in length. And, it's a resource guzzler, using almost >> 20 percent of the body's total blood and 20 percent of the oxygen at any given time.

More impressive than the anatomical and physiological miracle it is, the brain fuels connection with others, driving creativity, innovation, emotion, and the ability to learn. And now, thanks to innovations in the field of neuroandragogy, scientists are uncovering the secrets behind how the adult brain masters memory, recall, learning, and intelligence.

What scientists have uncovered is that each time we learn something new, there is an actual physical change to the brain itself. When we learn, a new branch forms and our neuronal network is expanded. Mechanically, when we receive a new stimulus, the

enough already, why would I have been promoted to office manager last year? But now she wants me to go to some certification course for project management. The truth is, I'm comfortable with my current skill set. I like things the way they are. If it ain't broke, why fix it?

Internal obstacles.

Oftentimes, our inability to learn is tied to the internal dynamics of our own psyche. Our own accomplishments are the first suspects. Once we've had some measure of success, it's easy to rest on our intellectual laurels. Others may have the opposite problem and suffer from a lack of self-esteem. Perhaps we've had a negative experience with regard to education in the past. Other internal barriers may

into flat-out fear. Fear is one of the most powerful blockers to learning because when we're afraid, our neurological systems go into shut-down mode, focusing only on survival. Stepping out of one's comfort zone is ripe with fear of failure.

Vignette 2 - More training? I thought my boss was kidding. Has she noticed we're in the midst of implementing a new citywide payroll software package? There's no time, and given the cost of this software initiative, no money! And where would I go anyway? Nothing is out there that works for my schedule, especially if I want to have any semblance of work/life balance.

External obstacles. External impediments to learning are

• **Availability:** Many options exist for continued learning but availability can still be a barrier. Location and timing of classes may create an issue. Likewise, opportunities to gain seats in sought-after programs may be limited.

So Why Bother?

With all of the impediments that impact our ability to pursue professional development, one might be persuaded to avoid the headache altogether. But despite the obstacles, scientists have shown that taking an active approach to continued professional development has tremendous benefit to mind and soul.

One of the more obvious benefits is job-related. Continual learning allows one to stay abreast of the latest advances in the field and invites innovative solutions to problem solving. It can result in greater job satisfaction, promotions, and mission accomplishment. This also transcends into our personal lives, allowing us to use our newly found knowledge in other environments.

There are neurological benefits as well. All of our cognitive processes, including memory, thinking, problem solving, and focus are enhanced if we take a purposeful approach to professional development. Each time we choose to learn something new, the brain grows stronger in its capacity to continue to grasp new concepts. In one University of Texas, Dallas study, researchers discovered that adults who engage in challenging mental activities improve their cognitive functioning over time.

Finally, researchers suggest that learning helps us live longer lives. This is especially true when combined with proper diet, exercise, and sleep. David Cutler

"ANYONE WHO STOPS LEARNING IS OLD, WHETHER AT 20 OR 80. ANYONE WHO KEEPS LEARNING STAYS YOUNG. THE GREATEST THING IN LIFE IS TO KEEP YOUR MIND YOUNG." - Henry Ford

brain compares it to our existing knowledge bank and finds a way to connect the stimulus to something we already know. When this connection happens, the brain changes and we hold the new stimulus as newly gained knowledge. Simple as that.

Barriers to Learning

The brain may be extremely complex, but so is the world of the public manager. Face it: There's plenty of clamor out there interfering with a public manager's ability to learn. But the fact remains that the noise levels in and out of the workplace are at an all-time high.

Vignette 1 - My supervisor in our county office is always bugging me to get additional training and I don't get why. If I wasn't smart

exist as well:

- Too much confidence: The brain is very comfortable with the knowledge it has already mastered. And we as human beings tend to rely on that knowledge. It gives us a sense of worth, well-being, and a place in the work community. It gets us to where we want to go, then we get comfortable.
- · Not enough confidence: Adults often face this barrier to learning, especially if it's been some time since they have had any formal education. Self-doubt is a perfectly normal reaction. Becoming a 'student' again is not akin to the roles many of us play: supervisor, manager, parent.
- Fear: Sometimes lack of confidence can easily morph

far easier to see, and easier to overcome. They may be institutional confines or exist outside the workplace. In a world of fewer resources and high demand, they may prove formidable. External barriers may also include:

- **No time:** Managing in the public sector is beyond a full-time job. Training that occurs during the workday can impact mission accomplishment, and afterhours learning events cut into valuable family time.
- **No money:** This is never easy. Sadly, educational and training programs are often the first to go in times of austere budgets. Adult learners with mortgages, children, and aging parents are unlikely to find residual funds.



and Adriana Lleras-Muney, in their meta-analysis of education-longevity research, found strong evidence that education has a direct impact on mortality. They also determined that education is a predictor of health in most countries.

What Next?

Continuous professional development is not out of the realm of possibilities for busy public managers. With a little ingenuity and a willingness to try something new, public managers can find themselves back on the path to a learning mindset. A few tips:

Get plenty of sleep. The good news is that sleep is an extremely important factor in keeping our brains fresh. Research by Dr. Matthew Walker, at the University of California, Berkeley, revealed that naps can enhance brain power and make you smarter. During one phase of the sleep cycle, the brain clears shortterm memory storage to make way for new information. The research also showed that

working through the night, not uncommon among public managers, lessens our ability to learn by nearly 40 percent.

Diet and exercise matter too!

Be flexible. No one working in the public sector is ever able to straighten up their desk and proclaim, "Whew, all caught up!" Many of the external barriers to learning can be tackled with a little flexibility.

Online courses are the most obvious solution. But it is important to think beyond traditional coursework. Free local events sponsored by public, nonprofit, or private business offer opportunities for dialogue on current issues with the added benefit

> "ONCE WE'VE **HAD SOME MEASURE** OF SUCCESS. IT'S EASY TO REST ON OUR INTELLECTUAL LAURELS."

of networking. And local community colleges and universities often offer free events to the general public.

Try something new, then **practice.** Mentally stimulating activities are very effective in creating new neural pathways. These pathways open the mind to new ways of thinking and seeing, and they generate what scientists call neuroplasticity. Crossword puzzles, number games, and logic problems can all be effective in helping to create these new pathways. Also, exposing oneself to other fields of study such as anthropology, music, or art can help to stimulate new ways of thinking.

Write it down. Keeping a journal in order to assess and track one's learning journey has tremendous advantages since adult learners tend to be focused on the big picture. Many times, the details of new learning will get lost because of our genetic predisposition to focus on the larger picture. Jotting down details in a journal

makes for an easy reference point as we move from new subject to new subject.

Learn so vou can teach. "See one, learn one, teach one" is a popular phrase that actually has scientific truth behind it. When we teach, we are more careful to organize the material in our minds, remember it, and present it. This is also a hallmark of learning organizations - managers who engage in a consistent cycle of teaching and learning with and for their teams.

The Last Word

We can't solve todav's problems with yesterday's thinking. Perhaps the answer to continuing professional development is to embrace the concept of a beginner's mind - referred to as 'shoshin' in Zen Buddhism. This simply represents a childlike curiosity - one that comes without preconceived assumptions, beliefs, expectations, or judgments. This provides a path for us to learn to think of things in ways we've never considered before.

When public managers make growth and learning a priority, they are poised to continue their professional and personal journeys while being open to new opportunities and viewpoints. The result is better and more creative services to all of our citizens. **P**4

PATRICK S. MALONE.

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Steering A Steady Budgeting Course

Can localities avoid the feast-or-famine cycle of expansive spending during good years and then, during bad years, of scrambling to make cuts or find more revenue? The short answer is yes, local governments *can* act to steel themselves, at least in part, against inevitable future economic declines. »

BY LEN WOOD

ocalities are most vulnerable when times are good. This is when big-ticket items are usually approved. Elected leaders are more apt to approve an expanded program, bend to generous employee compensation demands, or embark upon costly capital projects.

Perhaps the most critical period is when the economy starts to improve. At the first sign of recovery, elected officials are barraged with pent-up demands from powerful community groups, residents, and employee unions. Officials tend to forget that the good times will not last and the years of plenty are followed by economic downswings.

1. Build and maintain adequate reserves.

For many years, local governments were criticized for maintaining what were thought to be large general fund reserves (anything larger than 5 percent of expenditures). Yet, reserves play a significant role in maintaining financial stability.

A reserve equivalent to six months of general fund operating expenditures should be a minimum. Agencies must be vigilant in resisting raids on these reserves and in educating

which revenues are recurring (can be counted on each year for funding programs) and those that are nonrecurring (one time). For example, the property tax, which can be counted on year after year, is recurring revenue. Typical federal grants are nonrecurring revenues that usually sunset after a few years.

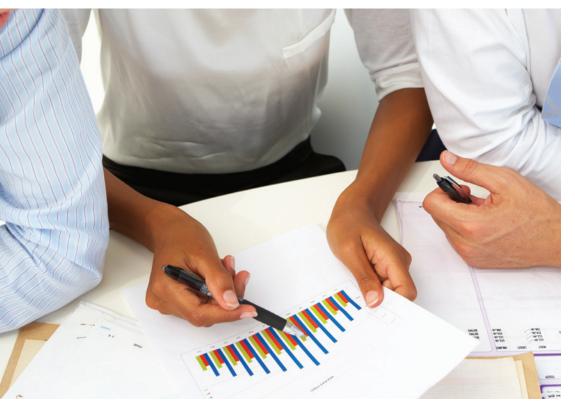
Other nonrecurring revenues are monies derived from building and engineering permits for a new housing tract. Building booms can create huge spikes in development-related fees. These fees should not be used to finance such ongoing expenses as police and fire personnel. Only recurring revenues should be used to fund recurring expenditures.

Nonrecurring revenues should be used for such priorities as building reserves, paying down debt, and improving infrastructure.

3. Require a structurally balanced budget.

In the minds of many officials, a budget is considered balanced if revenues exceed expenditures, regardless of whether the revenues are recurring or nonrecurring. We now know that local governments can wind up with a real fiscal mess when guided by this mindset. At some point, monies run out and the agency is left with a huge general fund deficit.

Local governments need to strive for a structurally balanced budget that requires recurring revenues equaling or exceeding recurring expenditures. If cities and counties cannot achieve structural balance, they need to publicly identify how much is supported by one-time money and how they intend to bring the budget into structural balance.



While constant vigilance is important at all times, it is especially important at this point. Before committing to a new program or increased expenditure, an agency needs to identify the total cost impacts (direct and indirect) of decisions and whether the department or agency can really afford them today and in the future.

Here are eight strategies local governments can pursue to avoid the pitfalls inherent in the feastor-famine economic cycle.

the public on the vital purpose of these monies.

2. Distinguish recurring from nonrecurring funds.

It is absolutely critical that a local government identify At the first sign of recovery, elected officials are barraged with pent-up demands from powerful community groups, residents, and employee unions. Officials tend to forget that the good times will not last and the years of plenty are followed by economic downswings.

4. Prepare longrange financial operating plans.

Local government operating budgets cover a one- or two-year period. Often, they do not adequately reveal the information needed to evaluate the agency's longterm financial condition. A budget can be balanced during the good times but be out of balance 12 months later.

Long-term financial plans identify critical items often left out of annual budgets; these can include deferred costs. impacts of grants ending, future costs of salary and benefit agreements, and postretirement benefits. A longrange plan serves as an earlywarning system and allows localities to take corrective actions before the problems become unmanageable.

5. Staff for the minimum.

Government workflow usually follows a peaks-andvalleys cycle. Some agencies staff for the peaks. A better approach is to staff for the minimum (the valleys) and use contracted services to meet peak demands.

6. Identify the true cost of employee salary and benefit packages.

Public employee unions have been extremely successful at negotiating compensation packages during the past decade. Employee salaries and benefits can consume from 70 to 90 percent of a local government's budget. Salaries are based on what the competition is paying.

The competition usually consists of neighboring local governments that recruit in the same market for the same skills and experience. Too often, this leads to escalating salaries and benefits. While this process will not be changed easily, local governments can do a better job of costing the full impact of both direct and indirect expenses before they approve negotiated salary packages.

Public employee benefit costs have been creeping upward, and in some cases, exceed more than 60 percent of salary costs. Localities should commission totalcompensation studies that show the total cost of an employee compensation package, rather than just the salary portion.

It is still open to question whether many local governments can afford the retirement and post-retirement health benefits granted to employees. While not popular with unions, more places may have to resort to tiered-benefit structures, with newer employees receiving scaled-down health and retirement benefits.

7. Protect agency assets.

Communities spend millions of dollars acquiring and developing capital assets—buildings, grounds, sewers, utilities, water facilities, and streets. Unfortunately, during periods of fiscal stress, infrastructure maintenance dollars are some of the first things cut or diverted in favor of other more visible programs.

The result of this diversion is not seen immediately. In some cases, it takes years before problems begin to appear, but eventually they show up in noticeable ways. Neglect of road maintenance leads to street deterioration. A simple asphalt overlay is not adequate anymore. Streets need to be totally rebuilt at a huge cost.

Or a water main replacement program is deferred. Shortly thereafter, water mains start bursting, causing thousands of dollars of damage and creating safety hazards. The multimilliondollar lawsuits soon follow.

Good budgeting requires that a percentage of current revenues always be devoted to preserving an agency's investment in its capital assets. Failing to protect assets not only costs more in the future, but also exacerbates community deterioration.

8. Avoid grant pitfalls.

During periods of economic distress, the federal and state governments may offer grants.

Paradoxically, these grants can undermine fiscal discipline. In 1994, the federal government began offering cities and counties a deal that could not be refused—federally funded police officers to fight crime through the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS).

This program comes with a huge balloon payment. Recipient agencies are expected to participate in the funding of these officers by increasing their contribution each year until they are responsible for the entire cost after the fourth year. Many agencies found that they could not afford the additional officers once the grants ran their course.

As one police chief lamented, "I truly don't believe that many cities, including ours, thought about how we were ever going to be able to afford the additional police officers after the grants ran out." Before pursuing any grants, a local government should publicly review its plan for paying for the new program once grant funding ceases.

The above strategies should be formalized, adopted by the governing body, and included as fiscal policies in the annual budget. During budget review, the manager or elected officials should report on these policies, indicating whether they have been complied with, and, if not, when and how compliance will be achieved. PM

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ugene, Oregon (pop. 160,000), is renowned for its exceptional quality of life, featuring such attributes as University of Oregon football, TrackTown USA, social activism, a high-tech community, wood products, world-class arts, an outdoor lifestyle, and craft beer. Those who intend to visit for a few months or years often stay for decades.

However, like many communities, Eugene is challenged by the plight of homelessness, and is continually seeking compassionate, caring, and equitable ways to support and improve the lives of all community members. WalletHub's

2018 article, "States with the Most Underprivileged Children," reports that Oregon is one of three states with the highest rate of homeless youth in the country. In Eugene, over 1,500 K-12 students are homeless, and over 350 of them are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. They often struggle to stay in school while grappling

daily with where to sleep, and how to eat, wash clothes, and get to school the next day. These students often end up "couch surfing" at friends' homes or staying in hotels, trailer parks, or cars.

Tragically, about one-third of these youth drop out of school within a year. Many report that within the first couple of nights away from the relatively structured setting of school, they ended up on the street where they were approached by drug dealers or sex traffickers and felt their lives were in danger. They are particularly vulnerable to physical and emotional trauma, mental health problems, self-harm, substance abuse, poor education, and a decline in overall health. They are scared, confused, and desperate. As the days pass, they say their circumstances force them to engage in the dangerous street culture to survive.

A school counselor alerted the 15th Night **Rapid Access Network** that a homeless student and her baby needed a host home. This was an unusual request because host home families typically house homeless students, not students with children of their own. A Family for Every Child, a local service agency, received the alert and quickly found a safe and stable host family until a longerterm solution could be arranged.

BY JON RUIZ. ICMA-CM

Community Unites to Support 15th Night

In September 2015, a broad array of public, private, and nonprofit organizations came together to spark 15th Night, a youth-informed community movement to end youth homelessness by helping unaccompanied students stay engaged in school, safely housed, and off the street. According to Looking Glass Community >>

neless Youth

Eugene, Oregon's 15th Night Galvanizes Community



Services, a nationally accredited local nonprofit agency committed to supporting at-risk youth, a youth who spends more than 14 consecutive nights on the street is 80 to 85 percent more likely to

become chronically homeless. We not only want to avoid that 15th night, we want to avert even one night on the street.

In addition to the trauma experienced by homeless youth, there is a financial cost to the community as well. Citing previous findings from other studies, the Oregon Department of Human Services' Homeless Youth Advisory Committee reached these conclusions in 2016²:

- The average annual cost per homeless youth placed in the criminal justice system is \$53,665 versus \$5,887 for moving a homeless youth off the streets. Moreover, runaways are 2.5 times more likely to be arrested as adults.
- Former runaways are 50 percent more likely than their counterparts to not have a high school degree or GED as adults. High school dropouts that are unemployed are estimated to impose a future lifetime taxpayer burden of \$170,740 and a social burden of \$525,030.
- More than 30 percent of formerly homeless youths report an alcohol problem, 40 percent report drug problems, and 50 percent report mental health problems over their lifetimes.

The Collective Impact Model

The 15th Night Movement is a broad community partnership committed to preventing youth from going on the street, but

> also intervening quickly if they do. 15th Night has intentionally chosen not to become its own nonprofit organization. We instead chose the Collective Impact model to leverage and align existing community resources in innovative ways. We intend to inspire a cultural shift, one in which our community not only finds it unacceptable for our kids to be living on the streets, but also commits to the next steps of making it stop.

John Kania and Mark Kramer of Stanford University first introduced the Collective Impact framework in 20113. They defined Collective Impact initiatives as "long-term commitments by a group of community leaders who have decided to abandon their individual agendas in favor of a collective approach."4

The social sector is filled with examples of partnerships, networks, and other types of joint efforts. But Collective Impact initiatives

are distinctly different. Unlike most collaborations, Collective Impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda,

school and working, started missing school. A police department school resource officer noticed her increasing absences and found out that something was wrong with her car. RAN was alerted, and within 10 minutes, a local auto repair shop offered to change her oil for free and split the repair costs

with another community

responder.

car while attending

shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants.

Five Key Principles

Within the Collective Impact framework, 15th Night focuses on five principles: innovation, invitation, youth centered, sustainability, and replication.

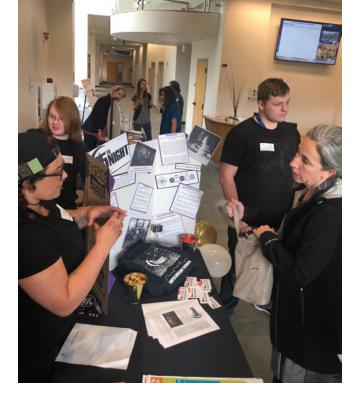
Innovation. Timely intervention is often critical to keeping students in school and off the streets. In February 2016, 15th Night partnered with the Technology Association of Oregon (TAO) to develop an alert system known as the Rapid Access Network (RAN). This web-based program connects service needs with service providers in real time. A diverse group of over 30 organizations are connected to RAN, ready to respond within one hour if possible, providing 65 different resources to help support homeless students. Since its inception, 336 students have connected to RAN providers for everything from such basic necessities as food, clothing, and shelter to services such as counseling, mentoring, and health care. RAN also provides some of the data needed to help us better understand youth needs, identify resource gaps, and address barriers in our effort to help end youth homelessness.

Invitation. 15th Night has cast a wide net, inviting many to join the movement. As part of the 15th Night Catalyst Team, schools, public safety providers, businesses, service providers, faith organizations, government agencies, and the public are all at the table. Their collective wisdom and teamwork guide the planning and ensure alignment while removing barriers and finding creative solutions for sustaining the 15th Night movement.

One group is a cohort of over 50 volunteers who respond when the 15th Night network is unable to meet a specific need of a student, often in less than 30 minutes of the request. 15th Night efforts have also resulted in systemic change. For example, with-

out a state identification card, navigating myriad support systems can be challenging and the process for receiving a card can be difficult.





The Junior League of Eugene figured out how to provide funding and easier access for homeless students to obtain identification cards.

Similarly, students applying for SNAP benefits face many barriers and have often given up trying to access this resource because

> of confusion, limited access, and other obstacles. In response, the Oregon Department of Human Services trained staff members in each branch to specifically help unaccompanied youth, respond to RAN requests for help with SNAP applications, and coordinate appointments.

Youth Centered. From its inception, 15 Night has reversed the power dynamic and empowered youth to be involved at all levels. "Nothing about us without us" is the underlying motto of the Youth Action Council (YAC), which is using its voice to impact change in our community. YAC members have a variety of life experiences. Some

are very familiar with living on the street while others, who have never experienced homelessness, care deeply about the issue. To mitigate potential barriers to youth participation, we have ensured meeting times are after school and have provided transportation, meals, and \$20 stipends per meeting. YAC facilitators help build relationships, provide training, ensure a safe and supportive environment, and assist with project management for activities such as summer outreach, Back to School BBQ, clothing drives, and the Youth Point in Time (PIT) Count, a comprehensive unsheltered count of youth experiencing homelessness conducted by the Human Services Division of Lane County, Oregon. The youth lead the planning, the projects, and the meetings.

Sustainability. Two years ago, 15th Night developed and initiated the School Mobilization Model (SMM) as a strategy to sustain the 15th Night movement. The SMM was piloted in school year 2017/2018 at South Eugene High School, one of Eugene's five public high schools. »

A high school student living in emergency temporary shelter had no laundry supplies, clothes, or food. She had worn her pajamas to school that day. RAN

was alerted, and clothing,

supplies, and food were

delivered to the school

by the end of the day.

The intents of the SMM are to directly connect youth in need with someone who can meet the need, broaden the base of support, and systematically identify and address the issues within and unique to a school catchment area, which includes the elementary and middle schools that feed a high school. To accomplish this, the SMM creates a community of students, school staff and teachers, parents, neighbors, alumni, faith organizations, and others nearby the school to meet students' basic needs. This consortium breaks down barriers that prohibit or discourage unaccompanied youth and/or students at risk of homelessness from accessing services (e.g. food, clothing, and mental health)

that enable students to stay in school and off the street. The SMM integrates community awareness and engagement, RAN technology, and the same Collective Impact model framework used by 15th Night.

Replication. In partnership with United Way of Lane County, 15th Night is replicating the successful experience at South Eugene High School in nine additional high schools in Eugene and the greater metro area. As part of the pilot program, RAN 2.0 was developed, allowing school-specific networks to connect to the larger community network.

A 15th Night Youth **Action Council (YAC)** student dropped out of high school. His family was homeless and moved often causing him to miss a lot of school days. The 15th Night Network activated quickly resulting in him earning his GED, landing his first job, and remaining an active YAC member. Several people jumped into "mother mode" and told him quitting wasn't an option. When he got his first paycheck, he asked what items he could buy for the 15th **Night Rapid Access** Network (RAN) because he wanted to give back.

Researchers at the Eugene-based Oregon Social Learning Institute are collecting 15th Night data to develop a predictive model to identify risk factors for student homelessness and assess the effectiveness of the SMM. As the SMM expands to other schools, practices that produce the best outcomes will be developed into a tool kit, which, along with the RAN, will be made available to schools and communities in Oregon and throughout the country.

The costs of youth homelessness far exceed the community resources needed to address the challenge. In Eugene, we are pursuing a cultural movement and raising the expectation we have for our community. We are igniting the possibility that none of our youth will ever experience a 15th Night.

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1 YEARS LATER:

What Local Governments Learned from the **Great Recession**





he official dates of the Great Recession, from December 2007 to June 2009, mean that June 2019 signals the "supposed" ten-year aftermath to which we

can apply hindsight. For local governments, the timeline of the downturn proved prolonged for employees and postponed for their governments. Employees first felt the impact at home – literally as many experienced dramatic losses in home values and in personal investments. Then, over the next two years the plummeting of property values - in some instances as much as 70 percent—translated into the loss of their employer's primary source of revenue (property taxes) necessitating cuts and adjustments creating a "double jeopardy" of sorts. Remembering the Great Recession's specific impacts to and responses by local government will better prepare communities

to ride out future downturns. Below are some lessons learned, and the steps taken to help insulate local government from future financial storms.

1. Practice Optimistic

Realism. Prepare realistic, not optimistic, revenue and expenditure estimates. Then, if the revenues exceed projections, the additional revenue can be used to fund other one-time expenditures. This includes reflecting the full cost of proposed capital

projects (not just construction but land, financing, operations, and maintenance) and full cost of labor contracts (including wages, benefits, and pensions) not just annually but over time.

2. Develop and implement a reserves policy and a responsible debt policy. Policies should be developed, approved, and in place to guide the proper use (and amount of) reserves and a responsible debt-service ratio before you actually need them. It becomes far too easy to "raid the reserves" if there are no policies in place. Cities can't borrow themselves out of a financial crisis nor should they deplete emergency reserves to meet payroll.

3. Manage and prioritize. During great financial stress, hiring freezes are often instituted to reduce operating expenses. Because of the lag time needed in recruiting and training public safety, it

is important to hire for the attrition to replace those leaving or retiring to ensure the proper complement of officers. Challenge the need to fill other vacancies. Review each job description to ensure it is up to date and relevant. When vacancies occur, ask if the particular service is essential, and if it can be filled another way such as an outside contract, intergovernmental agreement, part-time employee or temporary employee. Also budget for and add sustainable benefits to the part-time employee category (awarding government holidays, vacation, sick, and bereavement time but not health) to make it an attractive yet affordable option for you and the prospective part-time employees, including professionals. In many instances, these part-time offerings with select benefits are appealing to those seeking a better work-life balance.

4. Stay vigilant. Closely monitor changes in the local, state, and national economies for potential revenue impact. Although local governments may not have had advanced

> warning regarding the decimation of their investment portfolios in the Great Recession, adjustments in property values and tax collections provided opportunities and time to adapt. In fact, according to Adam Langley in a paper he presented at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, "local government revenue declines lagged behind economic changes by about three years in part due to cities accessing their emergency reserves." Langley further notes "governments would have been better off avoiding spending increases in 2009 and using funds to avoid larger cuts in 2011."1

REMEMBERING THE **GREAT RECESSION'S** SPECIFIC IMPACTS TO AND RESPONSES BY **LOCAL GOVERNMENT** WILL BETTER PREPARE **COMMUNITIES TO** RIDE OUT FUTURE DOWNTURNS.

5. Create a "Stop Doing" List. Jim

Collins, author of *Good to Great*, challenges leaders to create a "Stop Doing list" rather than a "to do" list for themselves and their organizations. Add to this 2018 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences winner Paul Romer's observation of "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste" and you have a powerful framework for reform. Local governments can easily succumb to mission creep or adopt heart-felt practices that detract from core services. Difficult financial times give us permission to revisit and reset the work programs and priorities. Such revisiting should also include an emergency cut plan before the emotions and politics step in. When the ratings agencies were affirming our AAA bond ratings recently, the reviewers asked "how we would respond to a downturn in the economy, including what services would be eliminated, if we had another Great Recession necessitating mid-year adjustments?" I was able to give them a list of services and divisions that could be temporarily suspended or reduced to avoid using reserves. Where feasible, our emergency reduction plan would also allow employees to be temporarily transferred to revenue producing departments to minimize disruption. The ratings agencies were pleased we had a thoughtful and strategic >> advanced emergency plan that did not simply "raid reserves."

6. Confirm the usefulness of your

EAP (Employee Assistance Program). Job losses, reductions in benefits or hours, loss of homes (or at least their values), and personal financial worries were real issues during the Great Recession, with local government being one of the major and stable employers in many communities. Make sure they have access to good help – your employees can't help your citizens if they are worried about providing for themselves and their families.

- 7. **Keep talking.** While you might prefer closed door discussions as you sort out a path forward, it's your duty to keep your elected officials fully apprised. It's equally important to develop a game plan and articulate it so your employees and community are informed and prepared. (This is also consistent with Tenet 9 of the ICMA Code of Ethics.)
- **8.** Ask others to step forward and **pool resources.** Involve your volunteer boards and committees, neighborhood

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simply "raid reserves."



associations, houses of faith, chambers of commerce, large employers, educational institutions, and others in meeting the needs of your community. You'd be surprised the number of people and organizations that want to help if they only knew what kind of task or help their local government needed.

9. Maintain critical infrastructure. As tempting as it is to postpone maintenance

when dollars are depleted, critical infrastructure must be maintained. Develop a priority list of what constitutes critical infrastructure and a plan for maintaining the non-critical. Otherwise, when the financial storm clouds disappear, you will be left with expensive catch up costs.

10. Take a breath. Financial downturns are very stressful times for communities, for employees, and for you, and you can't lead if you can't breathe. It also shows you and others the type of leader you truly are.

Today, many local governments have returned to or even exceeded their pre-Great Recession revenues. We must incorporate these, and other extraordinary lessons learned into ordinary practice or risk history repeating itself. Our communities, organizations, and employees deserve nothing less.

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Re-thinking Your Leadership Team

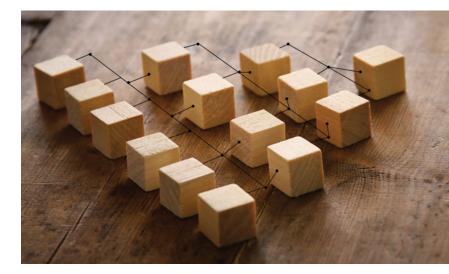
Traditionally, we think of local governments "providing" services and "regulating" individual and collective actions to create and sustain livable communities. But, these functions, while essential, constrain our thinking about the role of government officials—both elected and appointed. Reading this mission statement adopted by Varberg, Sweden— "The creative hotspot of Western Sweden" includes something called "watchwords:" new thinking, drive and ambition, knowledge, courage. And the mission statement is: "We act to simplify people's everyday life and inspire them to make their dreams come true." I am captured by this language because it seems so distant from those adopted by communities in America.

I think the concept of local government as provider and regulator falls short of a social contract that cultivates an environment that simplifies people's lives and inspires them to reach for dreams. I think we do as well; we just are not as poetic as Varberg in describing our aspirations for building community resilience and a sense of place where social capital is built and thrives to provide the rich culture where people can dream not only for themselves but collectively.

What if we expand the concept of local government as provider and regulator to include "convener" and "enabler?" The convening and enabling roles are growing in relevance and in our vocabulary in large part because they represent adaptations to contemporary challenges. We have structures and processes derived from providing and regulating functions. You, as local government administrators, are in the process of adapting to contemporary challenges that create dissonance with yesterday's problem-solving structures and processes. Think of individual job descriptions, for example. As traditionally constructed, how useful are they in today's dynamic and team-oriented work environment. A colleague of mine at the University of Kansas says job descriptions are "artifacts." Artifacts! They belong in museums!

The Leadership Team Concept

I'm not ready to transport the idea of a local government management team to the museum of organizational artifacts; it still is relevant in today's work environment. But competent management has become a "threshold" requirement for an effective staff. To add value, the contemporary department head must function as an effective "leadership team" member. Think of what we expect of the contemporary police chief. Running a



department effectively is a threshold requirement; building legitimacy in the community embraces "convening" and "enabling" functions and structures, and processes.

Let's take a step up the conceptual ladder—join me on the balcony! I see a leadership team whose reach extends horizontally as well as vertically. Vertical reach is confined within organizational silos and chains of command starting with the governing body. Horizontal reach extends not only between departments, but beyond. The University of Kansas colleague I referred to above also alerted me to "boundary management" as a function of contemporary local government administrators. Think of leadership team members not only looking down and up within the organization, but also

COMPETENT MANAGEMENT HAS BECOME A "THRESHOLD" REQUIREMENT FOR AN EFFECTIVE STAFF. TO ADD VALUE, THE **CONTEMPORARY DEPARTMENT HEAD MUST FUNCTION AS AN EFFECTIVE** "LEADERSHIP TEAM" MEMBER.

horizontally within the organization and outside the organization. Within, boundary management asks "when is it appropriate to maintain departmental boundaries? When is it appropriate to drop those boundaries? How do you invite the knowledge and experience that will enable you as a member of the leadership team to engage these challenges?

The embrace of convening and enabling roles for local governments challenges the boundaries between public/private/nonprofit, as well as jurisdictional boundaries. I know this is vague, but I think that is where we are; where you are. You are involved in an experiment; not of your choosing, but demanded by the environment you are working in. Traditionally government roles of provider and regulator are being »

increasingly supplemented by the convening and enabling roles which extend your required reach. This invite is not yours to reject. You must accept.

In my view as an academician focusing on local government and in eight years as city commissioner including two terms as the council's choice as mayor, the landscape of governance is changing because the problems we are dealing with do not fall neatly within jurisdictional and organizational boundaries. As we realize that the challenges we are dealing with do not neatly correspond with traditional organizational structures or jurisdictional boundaries, imagining, conceptualizing, and managing horizontally becomes an imperative not an elective. I know you are doing these things now, BUT are you consciously learning from your experiences in ways that can lead to productive generalizations transferable to aspiring top level managers?



Think of "anchor institutions" in your community. Roots that represent continuity and strength and branches that reach beyond seeking connections. And then think of the role of local governments in encouraging, "convening," "fostering," and "enabling" these institutions as a partner would. Think about your local government as convening not only residents but representatives of these anchor institutions in what former city manager Jim Oliver



(Norfolk) labeled a "cabinet" of community governance. A cabinet of individuals who are willing to accept their responsibility as leaders of anchor institutions. And think of your leadership team in this environment.

You have the legitimacy that allows you to convene and enable. This is where we are and where we are headed as well. And the concept of "leadership team" is an adaptation to these evolving functions. You are part of an experiment whose dimensions are unknown. But, I know the purpose. Your goal is to build and strengthen community resilience where aspirational thinking is not founded in fear but in strength. As you grow into a leadership team, your responsibilities are to recognize the value and the power of convening and enabling, to reflect on that value, and foster a leadership team mindset that will encourage aspirational thinking. PM



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Manage This

Putting Smart Community Strategies to Work BY JESSICA JOHNSTON

Many smart technologies may seem like they belong to a distant future, while others have become practically necessary overnight. Navigating the needs of individual communities will require local government leaders to be open to new and innovative solutions from unconventional partners, oftentimes outside of their organizations or even jurisdictions. A new report from ICMA and Siemens, "Putting Smart Community Strategies to Work in Small and Midsize Jurisdictions," offers several strategies worth considering (icma.org/smartcommunity-strategies).

1 Discuss the vision and value of your community.

Communities that have the support of elected officials, staff, and community members already have the first building block in place to implement smart solutions. Having discussions about a vision for the future, along with what residents and stakeholders value, will allow technology to play a supportive versus leading role in creating smart solutions. Incorporating technology solutions into broader planning and performance expectations will help staff and community members see that technology provides a path to providing better services and more livable communities.

Determine if your IT infrastructure can handle the data that comes with smart technology solutions.

Having more data undoubtedly drives more informed management decisions, and even provides a level of predictability, through data analytics, that was not available to most communities in the past. However, technology solutions require end-to-end considerations to ensure that resources are in place to handle large amounts of data. Body-worn cameras provide a timely example. Many jurisdictions implemented body-worn camera programs, but then didn't have the storage space or technical capacity to deal with collection and analysis

Security is another key component. Understanding public records laws in a particular jurisdiction is important to understanding how collected data is classified. Is the data a public record? Does it contain sensitive information about individuals that needs to be secured? Are there federal Homeland Security implications? These are all questions that will need to inform the security of data as well as the physical IT assets within a jurisdiction.

3 Decide if human resources needs will shift because of smart technology implementation.

As more functions become automated, it will be important to understand how employees who previously handled monitoring or maintenance functions might be impacted. In the case of Lakeland, Florida, staff who previously performed manual reading of water levels were easily retrained to use the application associated with new sensors. On the other hand, Bellevue, Washington, has used natural workforce attrition as an opportunity to reconsider the type of FTE required to meet the community's future needs.

4 Identify who your critical partners are and the status of those relationships.

In every example, partnerships both within and outside of the municipality were critical to the success of smart community projects. Cross-departmental collaboration was fundamental in every case, and while it was informal in some communities and formalized through working groups or innovation teams in others, leadership must support a culture for those relationships to occur.

Community partners are the connection between smart technology solutions and economic growth. The vast majority of small and midsize communities will not be able to make the technology and infrastructure investments they need to be successful in the future by themselves. Bringing neighboring jurisdictions, academic institutions, private sector businesses, and community groups to the table to co-create solutions can lead to co-financing, laying the groundwork to attract the next generation of residents excited by the community's potential.



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Go Teach a Course!

BY ROB CARTY



ICMA's Advisory Board on Graduate

Education (icma.org/abge) urges members to share their experience by going back to the classroom. Serving as adjunct faculty, a guest lecturer, or manager in residence at a local university is a rewarding way to give back to the profession and attract students to local government careers.

How to Get Started

ABGE members have developed resources for managers who want to go back to the classroom. Here are several ways you can engage with MPA or MPP programs:

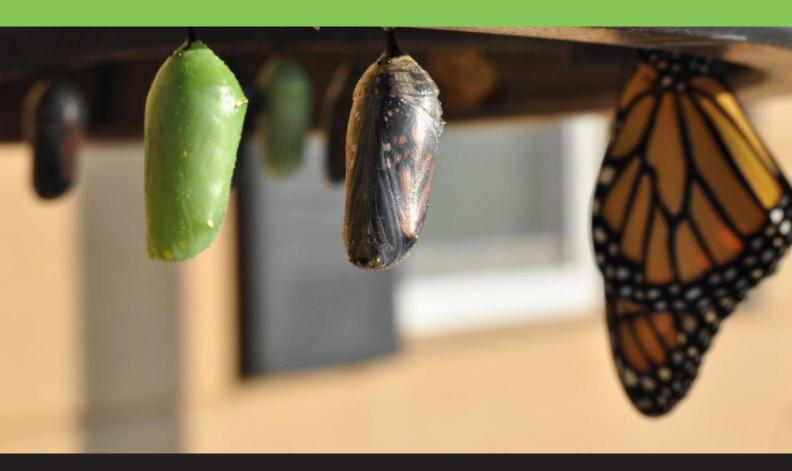
- 1. Visit icma.org/teach and explore resources there!
- 2. Find a school in your area and express an interest in teaching. The Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) maintains a list of member schools with accredited graduate public administration programs at naspaa.org/membership/ list-naspaa-members. For other colleges or universities in your area not on this list, check with the public

- administration, political science, or business departments about undergraduate offerings in local government or public administration and whether the department has a graduate program in public administration.
- 3. Or, if you'd like to learn a little more before contacting a school, download ICMA's publication Managers as Teachers: A Practitioner's Guide to Teaching Public Administration at icma.org/ documents/managers-teachers.
- 4. Each year at the ICMA Annual Conference, the ABGE hosts a discussion session for members who teach or for those who would like to teach. Watch for information in the conference program. It's usually on Monday, 4-5 pm.
- 5. If you have taught a course in the past, send your syllabus to rcarty@icma.org, and we will include it in our resources for others who are interested in teaching similar courses. PM



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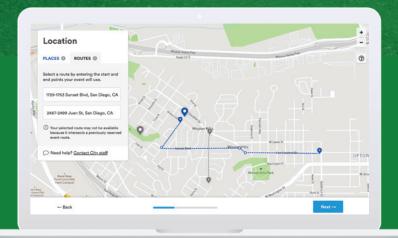
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