

June 2016

## **Suggested Protocols for Area Manager Group Pilot “Buddy Program”**

### **Background**

- As part of the Cal-ICMA “Survival Skills” Project, Cal-ICMA conducted a number of focus groups to identify stressful conflicts experienced by City/County Managers and approaches to provide support.
- To promote peer support at the Area Manager Group (AMG) level, the League’s City Managers Department has proposed that AMG’s experiment with a “buddy” program.
- The goals of the “Buddy” Program include:
  - ✓ Welcome new City/County Managers to the region and the Area Manager Group (“welcome wagon” concept)
  - ✓ Keep an eye out for early warning signs of any Manager under stress
  - ✓ Provide one-to-one peer support and resources for any Manager under duress

### **Suggested Protocols**

1. The President of the AMG appoints a willing City/County Manager to serve as the “buddy” for a 12-24 month period.
2. The buddy coordinates with the ICMA Senior Advisor assigned to the AMG. The buddy program compliments/supplements the Senior

Advisor's efforts by providing a Manager under stress with both a "post-career/long tenured" perspective and an "active/current manager" perspective.

3. The buddy proactively reaches out to any new Manager in the region served by the AMG and . . .
  - a. Schedules a coffee or meal with the new Manager
  - b. Welcomes the new Manager to the AMG, encourages the Manager to participate in the AMG, and provides an orientation in respect to how the AMG operates
  - c. Encourages the new Manager to contact the buddy with any questions, issues, or challenges
4. With assistance of the Senior Advisor, the buddy keeps an eye out for early warning signs of any Manager in trouble.
5. The buddy proactively reaches out to any Manager under duress, schedules a coffee or meal, listens and offers any advice, resources or other support. Resources and advice are helpful; however, the emphasis is on listening and social support.
6. The Cal-ICMA "Survival Skills" Project will put together a resource list to support the buddy and any other Managers who reach out to a colleague in distress.

### **A Few Simple Ground Rules**

The buddy works to create a "safe" environment for sharing problems and challenges.

The conversation is confidential.

There is a forward orientation--how can the Manager dealing with a stressful challenge improve the situation or address the challenge going forward?

The Manager receiving peer support is under no obligation to act on any advice.

This buddy program in the AMG does not preclude other Managers from reaching out to a colleague under stress.