

Practices for Effective Local Government Leadership

ICMA delivers the latest research in the 18 core areas critical for effective local government leadership and management.

ICMA University is the premier resource for local government management training. Our programs are designed to advance your career, enrich your community, and contribute to your professional fulfillment. ICMA's online workshops and programs bring the latest research, from leading experts, to your office. Our conferences and in-person workshops allow you to network with colleagues and exchange ideas. All ICMA University programs are drawn from the 18 core competencies determined by members to be essential to local government management.

ICMA's professional development programs are focused on encouraging the local government profession to think in terms of "leading" the organization and not just "managing" the organization. Leadership is defined as getting others to do willingly and do well what needs to be done by developing, articulating and embodying a set of shared values, a shared sense of purpose and a shared vision of the desired outcome.

ICMA recognizes the leadership role of local government managers in creating and maintaining resilient and livable communities. Through the responsible stewardship of public resources, our communities will retain the economic, environmental and social capital needed to prosper for future generations.

1. Staff Effectiveness

Promoting the development and performance of staff and employees throughout the organization

Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **Coaching/Mentoring:** Providing direction, support, and feedback to enable others to meet their full potential (requires knowledge of feedback techniques; ability to assess performance and identify others' developmental needs)
- **Team Leadership:** Facilitating teamwork (requires knowledge of team relations; ability to direct and coordinate group efforts; skill in leadership techniques)
- **Empowerment:** Creating a work environment that encourages responsibility and decision making at all

organizational levels (requires skill in sharing authority and removing barriers to creativity)

- **Delegating:** Assigning responsibility to others (requires skill in defining expectations, providing direction and support, and evaluating results)

2. Policy Facilitation

Helping elected officials and other community actors identify, work toward, and achieve common goals and objectives

Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **Facilitative Leadership:** Building cooperation and consensus among and within diverse groups, helping them identify common goals and act effectively to achieve them; recognizing interdependent relationships and multiple causes of community issues and anticipating the consequences of policy decisions (requires knowledge of community actors and their interrelationships)
- **Facilitating Council Effectiveness:** Helping elected officials develop a policy agenda that can be implemented effectively and that serves the best interests of the community (requires knowledge of role/authority relationships between elected and appointed officials; skill in responsibly following the lead of others when appropriate; ability to communicate sound information and recommendations)
- **Mediation/Negotiation:** Acting as a neutral party in the resolution of policy disputes (requires knowledge of mediation/negotiation principles; skill in mediation/negotiation techniques)

3. Functional and Operational Expertise and Planning

A component of Service Delivery Management.

Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **Systems Planning:** Understanding the processes by which functional and operational systems can impact the ability to grow jobs and improve the economy, to control cost of government, and to improve quality of life; recognizing that the various systems are interrelated and interdependent and must work in a coordinated fashion in order to maintain long-term community vitality
- **Functional/Operational Expertise:** Understanding the basic principles of service delivery in functional areas--e.g., public safety, community and economic development, human and social services, administrative services, public works (requires knowledge of service areas and delivery options)
- **Operational Planning:** Anticipating future needs, organizing work operations, and establishing timetables for work units or projects (requires knowledge of technological advances and changing standards; skill in identifying and understanding trends; skill in predicting the impact of service delivery decisions)

4. Citizen Service

A component of Service Delivery Management: Determining citizen needs and providing responsive,

equitable services to the community

5. Performance Measurement/Management and Quality Assurance

A component of Service Delivery Management: Maintaining a consistently high level of quality in staff work, operational procedures, and service delivery

6. Initiative, Risk Taking, Vision, Creativity, Innovation and Continuous Improvement

A component of Strategic Leadership: Setting an example that urges the organization and the community toward experimentation, change, creative problem solving, and prompt action

Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **Initiative and Risk Taking:** Demonstrating a personal orientation toward action and accepting responsibility for the results; resisting the status quo and removing stumbling blocks that delay progress toward goals and objectives
- **Vision:** Conceptualizing an ideal future state and communicating it to the organization and the community
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Developing new ideas or practices; applying existing ideas and practices to new situations
- **Continuous Improvement:** Recognizing basic principles and practices required to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government systems

7. Technological Literacy

A component of Strategic Leadership: Demonstrating an understanding of information technology and ensuring that it is incorporated appropriately in plans to improve service delivery, information sharing, organizational communication, and citizen access

8. Democratic Advocacy and Public Engagement

Demonstrating a commitment to democratic principles by respecting elected officials, community interest groups, and the decision making process; educating citizens about local government; and acquiring knowledge of the social, economic, and political history of the community

Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **Democratic Advocacy:** Fostering the values and integrity of representative government and local democracy through action and example; ensuring the effective participation of local government in the

intergovernmental system (requires knowledge and skill in intergovernmental relations)

- **Public Engagement:** Committing to inform and involve the community in decisions that may affect them; dedicating resources and efforts to find meaningful ways to interact with communities so as to reflect collaboration, diversity of thought, and incorporation of public input into the decision-making process

9. Inclusion

Understanding and harnessing the ability to create an environment of involvement, respect, and connection of diverse ideas, backgrounds, and talent throughout the organization and the community. Authentically bringing everyone, including traditionally excluded individuals and groups, into processes, activities, and decision/policy making

10. Budgeting

Preparing and administering the budget; implementing long-term financial planning that integrates strategic planning and is reflective of a community's values and priorities

11. Financial Analysis

Interpreting financial information to assess the short-term and long-term fiscal condition of the community, determine the cost-effectiveness of programs, and compare alternative strategies

12. Human Resources Management

Ensuring that the policies and procedures for employee hiring, promotion, performance appraisal, and discipline are equitable, legal, and current; ensuring that human resources are adequate to accomplish programmatic objectives

13. Strategic Planning

Positioning the organization and the community for events and circumstances that are anticipated in the future. Developing a strategic plan which identifies all possible stakeholders, including those from traditionally underrepresented groups, and incorporates their input, defines mechanisms for informing the public and gaining public support, details specific goals, and specifies work processes to accomplish those goals

14. Advocacy and Interpersonal Communication

Facilitating the flow of ideas, information, and understanding between and among individuals; advocating effectively in the community interest

Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **Advocacy:** Communicating personal support for policies, programs, or ideals that serve the best interests of the community
- **Interpersonal Communication:** Exchanging verbal and nonverbal messages with others in a way that demonstrates respect for the individual and furthers organizational and community objectives (requires ability to receive verbal and nonverbal cues; skill in selecting the most effective communication method for each interchange)

15. Presentation Skills

Conveying ideas or information effectively to others

16. Media Relations

Communicating information to the media in a way that increases public understanding of local government issues and activities and builds a positive relationship with the press

17. Integrity

Demonstrating fairness, honesty, and ethical and legal awareness in personal and professional relationships and activities

Practices that contribute to this core content area are:

- **Personal Integrity:** Demonstrating accountability for personal actions; conducting personal relationships and activities fairly and honestly
- **Professional Integrity:** Conducting professional relationships and activities fairly, honestly, legally, and in conformance with the ICMA Code of Ethics (requires knowledge of administrative ethics and specifically the ICMA Code of Ethics)
- **Organizational Integrity:** Fostering ethical behavior throughout the organization through personal example, management practices, and training (requires knowledge of administrative ethics; ability to instill accountability into operations; and ability to communicate ethical standards and guidelines to others)

18. Personal Development

Demonstrating a commitment to a balanced life through ongoing self-renewal and development in order to increase personal capacity

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By John Zakian

While the "[Strategic Disaster Planning](#)" article (April 2017 PM) certainly has value, there are two critical omissions.

Public Engagement for Police Departments



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By Rod Gould, ICMA-CM

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