

## The Value of Sharing Your Agency's Story

One of the “indispensable competencies” for local government leaders is the ability to communicate through stories, according to Frank Benest, former city manager of Palo Alto and consultant to local governments. Benest uses storytelling as a tool to help local officials with strategic decision-making, because stories provide a compelling way to convey who you are and where you are going.

The Institute for Local Government (ILG) website offers more than 200 community stories that highlight best practices, innovative local action and new policies implemented by local agencies in California. These stories can encourage, inspire and share lessons learned. In today's era of fiscal austerity, such stories can also help to avoid reinventing the wheel.

### Take Advantage of These Online Resources

For example, ILG's Sustainable Communities program provides resources and education for local officials in the areas of climate change, healthy communities, land use and the environment. In this context, community stories demonstrate the breadth of local agency activities and provide examples of how to play a leadership role in protecting and improving community health through planning and land use ([www.ca-ilg.org/landuse](http://www.ca-ilg.org/landuse)).

In the area of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, ILG offers best practice stories related to:

- Energy efficiency and conservation;
- Water and wastewater systems;
- Green building;
- Waste reduction and recycling;
- Climate-friendly purchasing;
- Renewable energy and low-carbon fuels;
- Efficient transportation;
- Land use and community design;
- Open space and offsetting carbon emissions; and
- Promoting community and individual action.

Find these stories at [www.ca-ilg.org/ClimatePractices](http://www.ca-ilg.org/ClimatePractices).

Local agency efforts in public engagement are another natural avenue for storytelling. ILG's Public Engagement and Collaborative Governance program provides resources that support effective and inclusive community involvement in local agency decision-making. Visit [www.ca-ilg.org/PEtopic](http://www.ca-ilg.org/PEtopic) to read about such efforts in the areas of:

- Planning, housing and redevelopment;
- Public works;
- Human services;
- Health and the environment;
- Climate change;
- Emergency preparedness;
- SB 375; and
- Day labor centers.

In addition, many helpful stories are available at [www.ca-ilg.org/budgetingstories](http://www.ca-ilg.org/budgetingstories) about the different approaches local officials throughout California are using to engage the public in budgeting.

### Lead by Example

ILG strives to promote good government at the local level and encourages all local agencies to lead by example and tell their stories. As Harvard Professor Howard Gardner said, "Stories are the single most powerful weapon in a leader's arsenal." ILG's stories are also told in video format. If you would like to share your agency's story, either in print or video, contact Kelly Plag, director of communications and development, ILG; e-mail: [kplag@ca-ilg.org](mailto:kplag@ca-ilg.org) or visit [www.ca-ilg.org](http://www.ca-ilg.org).

This story is a service of the Institute for Local Government (ILG) whose mission is to promote good government at the local level with practical, impartial, and easy-to-use resources for California communities. ILG is the nonprofit 501(c)(3) research and education affiliate of the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties. For more information and to access the Institute's resources on local government, visit [www.ca-ilg.org/localgovt101](http://www.ca-ilg.org/localgovt101).

The Institute welcomes feedback on this resource:

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