

Goal Setting for Traction

Mistakes to Avoid in Local Government Priority Setting and Five Solutions

By Rod Gould, Chair, Institute for Local Government

Every local agency faces the essential dilemma of too many public needs chasing too few resources. This is particularly true in the wake of the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Annual goal or priority setting has long been considered a best practice in local government as a way to make decisions about which community priorities warrant an agency's limited resources.

However, too often these efforts fail to deliver the anticipated results. Priorities can be quickly forgotten, goals not achieved, and finger pointing and blaming can begin. When that happens, elected leader-staff relations suffer, and the priority (or goal-setting) process itself becomes suspect. The local government's public trust and legitimacy can be weakened.

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Civility needed to stem eroding confidence in democratic institutions

Leaders in every level of government will need to do their part to address eroding confidence in government, but local officials can play an important role.

Op-Ed by ILG Executive Director Erica Manuel

Americans' confidence in government is at an all-time low – sadly, that's not new information. A September 2020 study from the Pew Research Center found that merely 20% of Americans trust the federal government. This is underscored by an article in The Atlantic released earlier in 2020 highlighting a global study that provides shocking evidence of a major decline in support of democracy – not only in the United States, but also in many other countries. In fact, global confidence in democracy has reached a historic low. This does not bode well for our nation, our state or our local communities.

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Leadership and good governance in the time of COVID-19

Article by ILG Executive Director Erica Manuel

In times of crisis, people often turn to their community leaders for guidance and support. That leader may be a spiritual guide, a community advocate, or an elected official. During this particular time of economic uncertainty, when residents' health and wellbeing is also at stake, local government leaders have the unique opportunity to rise to the challenge of being that role model for the communities they serve. But effective leadership is no small task. It requires diligence, integrity, and a deep understanding of good governance — trust, accountability, responsiveness, and transparency.

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