Breaking into **Local Government**

A guidebook for career changers

ICMA

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

ICMA advances professional local government worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing professional management of local government. ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, provides member support; publications, data, and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to more than 9,000 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world. The management decisions made by ICMA's members affect 185 million individuals living in thousands of communities, from small villages and towns to large metropolitan areas.

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Contents

Introduction

The face of professional local government management is changing. No longer does the basic career path stem from traditional MPA programs from which interns can grow into the positions of management analyst, assistant to the manager, assistant manager, and ultimately city manager. Because of budget constraints, staff reductions, and a general reinvention of the way we work, today there are many ways to get to the top administrative position in a local government.

Change can be painful, but it also creates opportunity. With an unprecedented number of senior management at or beyond retirement age and fewer staff prepared to replace them, attracting, preparing, and retaining the next generation of city, county, and town management requires that we build a robust talent pool. In fact, to fill the existing and anticipated gaps in the management career path, the profession actually needs to tap a wider talent pool and attract talented individuals seeking to change careers. To this end, in 2011 ICMA created the **Task Force on Breaking into Local Government**, charged with developing resources to help new graduates and career changers break into the local government management career field.

The task force was divided into four committees:

1. The Sustained Relationships/Mentoring Committee worked to develop guidelines to help establish a mentorship program.
2. The Career Changers Committee created a survey to be distributed to "nontraditional" managers who changed professions midcareer. The goal was to identify the obstacles they encountered in their transition from either the private sector or the military sector to the local government management profession. This guide was developed as a result of the survey.
3. The University Relations Committee did a case study of the city of Mesa, Arizona, and Arizona State University to determine what resource(s) could be developed to assist new university graduates looking to break into the local government management career field.

4. The Foot in the Door Committee created the document "Internship Case Studies Points to Consider When Using an Intern" and provided a number of write-ups about the internship experience, which were published ICMA's newly revised internship resource (see appendix).

This guide is the culmination of the work that was done by ICMA member volunteers over a two-year period. Along with case studies that highlight the transition of nontraditional managers into professional administrator positions, it provides a number of resources in the appendix that will help those who aspire to follow the same career path.

The products created by the two task forces support the following ICMA Strategic Plan strategy and tactics:

- **Strategy:** Be the leader in offering career services to local government professionals throughout their lives.
- **Tactic:** Ensure continuous improvement and evaluation of career resources to serve members at all levels of their local government career
- **Tactic:** Show the next generation of managers the career benefits of professional local government management

Participants in the Year One Breaking into Local Government Task Force (2011–2012), chaired by Dawn Peters, were Leslie Beauregard, Steven Belec, John Brooks, Chantal Cotton, Evelyn Douglas, James Fisher, Nijah Fudge, Kimberly Greer, Bradley Hanson, Jo Ella Hoye, Carol Jacobs, Opal D. Mauldin-Robertson, Annette Privette Keller, Scott Sellers, Jeffrey S. Snyder, Eric Sterman, Brent Stockwell, Joseph Thompson, Albert Lee Tripp, Adam Umbrasas, Dan Weinheimer, and Jerri Wilson.

Participants in the **Year Two Breaking into Local Government Task Force** (2012–2013), also chaired by Dawn Peters, were Creighton A. Avila, Adam J. Bentley, Troy Brown, Michael Bruckner, William Carter, Jill F. Cornett, Kristen Denne, Nate Geinzer, Jay A. Gsell,

Coming from the Private Sector

David Bullock
Town Manager, Town of Longboat Key, FL (2012 est. pop. 6,993)

Davd Bullock has been in the public sector for over nineteen years. He currently serves as the town manager for the Town of Longboat Key, Florida. His advice: "You have to want to do public service."

Impetus for Change

Bullock started his professional career working for his father's construction company. After transitioning into landfill operations, he decided to become a management consultant for the public sector concerning public works issues; it was in that position that he gained his first-hand exposure to local government. He then saw an ad in a publication and started his career off as a public works director, later becoming deputy county administrator and finally transitioning to the town manager position he currently holds.

Bullock notes that "being able to actually see a project from the formulation to the completion" was one deciding factor for his move to the public sector. He also said that, "The desire to serve the public and make a difference in the community as well as traveling less were other reasons for going into the public sector." As a management consultant, Bullock traveled extensively. Going into the public sector dramatically lessened the amount of traveling that he had to do throughout the year.

Similarities and Differences

The skills that he feels were transferable from his previous career are budgeting and finance, leadership, communication, problem solving, planning, and relationship building. When asked if there is one specific skill that he feels is integral to local government managers, Bullock replies, "It's all about relationships. If you can't maintain the relationships with the diverse people you come in contact with, you will have trouble." When he was hired as a deputy county administrator, he had little in common with the person who hired

"The desire to serve the public and make a difference in the community as well as traveling less were other reasons for going into the public sector."

him. He feels that his background had distinguished him from the other applicants because the county wanted to hire someone outside the public sector.

Evaluation of Change

In transitioning from his previous career into public management, Bullock did encounter some obstacles. He had to learn what the various departmental responsibilities were and how the departments interacted with each other. He felt that there was a different mindset in public management. With his previous career, he felt that there was an "action = response" in which if an action was taken, there would be direct response (consumers). In public management, there are more processes meaning when an action was taken, there are more influences before a response is elicited. Bullock notes that there are motivating and demotivating times as with any field. His decision-making model is a blend: "Use an analytical approach while being a communicator."

Guidance for Others in the Private Sector Considering a Local Government Career

When asked what's to be learned from his experience, Bullock responds, "City manager jobs are about intelligence, humility, relationships, and a desire to make

> Bullock encourages people to enter public service only "if they have the service ethic in their heart."

the world a better place. The position requires a mix, sometimes using more of one quality than the other."

When trying to decide whether to "break into local government," Bullock had a mentor to discuss the issue with him. Instead of telling him to pursue a local government career, the mentor asked him about his values and what he felt was important. Bullock's answers led him to a self-discovery and an understanding that the local government is where he wanted to be. Bullock encourages people to enter public service only "if they have the service ethic in their heart." Bullock feels that, to encourage future career changers, the profession needs to market itself to various industries.

Coming from the Private Sector

Jan Cooke
Finance Director, Half Moon
Bay, CA (2012 est. pop. 11,653)

"I was looking to do something different." That's how Jan Cooke describes her experience of breaking into local government. She had been working for GAP Inc., a leader in the apparel industry and one of the world's most prominent Fortune 100 companies. Prior to that she had held a management job in one of the Big Four accounting firms. After more than fifteen years in the private sector, she was ready to do something that would allow her to give back to her community.

Impetus for Change

After making a conscious decision to leave GAP Inc., Cooke spent several introspective months considering her next career move. A couple of close friends were already working in the public sector at the municipal level. They explained to her how much they really enjoyed their jobs and encouraged her to consider that option.

Cooke's vast, high-profile experience with budgeting, long-range planning, internal controls, and annual reports provided her with a background for success in municipal finance. When the opportunity to serve as finance manager in Half Moon Bay became available, she threw her hat into the ring. The interim city manager of Half Moon Bay quickly recognized her skills and offered her the job. She served in that position for nearly two years and was promoted to finance director in 2009.

Similarities and Differences

While working for a large corporation, Cooke was responsible for the finances of a large operational area, doing budgets and other financial activities. In the coastal community of Half Moon Bay, Cooke has responsibility for the entire finance operation of the city, which includes a more diverse set of responsibilities. Working with a total staff of sixteen, she feels she has a broader role and can see the impact of her work on the operations of the municipality and in the community on a daily basis.

> [S]he feels she has a broader role and can see the impact of her work on the operations of the municipality and in the community on a daily basis.

For instance, a few years ago the city was facing the fallout from an economic downturn that left the its fund accounts critically low. Cooke and other department managers worked closely with the city manager and city council to make the difficult decisions to contract out key services such as law enforcement and parks and recreation. These decisions have proven to be financially beneficial for the city and have improved service levels in the community. In a small municipality, Cooke states, "I can directly see the impact of decisions that I have helped to make, which is very rewarding".

Evaluation of Change

Cooke admits that this career change has had its challenges. "There is a very steep learning curve for public finance, and new entrants into the field have to learn the industry, people, and processes from the ground up. While it is like starting over in some aspects, most skills are transferrable from the private sector, such as budgeting and forecasting."

Additionally, Cooke conveys a deep and sincere appreciation for the peer support she garners from the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers and the San Mateo Finance Officer's Group. While finance managers in the private sector are required to protect information from the competition, her peers in the public sector are more than willing to share information and ideas.

Guidance for Moving from the Private to the Public Sector

Cooke feels that the public sector provides excellent career opportunities for those interested in public service. She indicates that the network of professionals and organizations is very strong and encouraging. Her advice to those entering the public sector is to seek out and take advantage of all of those networks and organizations.

When asked whether she would encourage someone to enter the public finance profession, she answers, "Yes, there is a lot of satisfaction to be found in the public sector, like knowing that you have been instrumental in helping a community get back on solid financial footing."

Case Study:

Coming from the Private Sector

Steven Kroeger
Assistant City Manager,
Yuba City, CA (2012 est. pop.
65,050)

Steven is the Assistant City Manager in Yuba City, California, a city with a population of 64,925. Steven's path to becoming a local government manager is unique.

Impetus for Change

Upon graduating from the University of Southern California–Santa Clara with a degree in finance, Kroeger started his career working for a private consulting company in San Francisco. He had been working in the private sector for three years when, while reading the local newspaper, he noticed an ad for a finance director in Live Oak, a small city of 5,000 near where his wife grew up. Kroeger wanted to make a difference in the community by serving the public, so he contacted the finance director from his hometown to discuss the opportunity. She enthusiastically encouraged him to apply for the job and recommended he read the Government Finance Officers Association "Blue Book" in preparation for the interview because it includes everything he would need to know about public finance and accounting. Kroeger got the job and was the first finance director in the City of Live Oak. When Live Oak adopted the council-manager form of government in 1995, Kroeger became the city manager.

Similarities and Differences

Upon entering the public sector, Kroeger was most shocked by the support system he was welcomed into. Unlike businesses and organizations in the private sector, local governments openly share knowledge and ideas. At the same time, local government management did come with challenges. Sometimes Kroeger found it difficult to adjust to the pace of government bureaucracy, but his impatience often worked in his favor by helping him push the pace of the organization. In terms of work/life balance, Kroeger found that the public sector and private sector require similar amounts of work. However,

> Kroeger cautions that while many private sector managers may be turned off by the public sector's reputation of being averse to change, many governments actually want people with innovative ideas.

despite regular evening meetings, a career in local government allowed more flexibility during the day.

Evaluation of Change

Kroeger attributes his successful transition into local government to his initiative, openness of mind, and naivety. He took the initiative by talking to local government people and figuring out what kind of leaders local governments need. The finance director in his hometown was instrumental in helping him break into local government. Once in the public sector, Kroeger found that his private sector experience aided in his success. His open mind enabled him to take advantage of opportunities that others ruled out as impossible; for example, he assumed that all levels of government worked cooperatively, so he approached the county to find ways in which the county and city could work together. He also found that his naivety helped him find unique solutions that benefited the community.

Guidance for Applicants Looking to Break into Local Government

In general, when applying for any position, an applicant should find out as much as possible about the

> Many skills from the private sector are transferrable, but one must be able to frame, or translate, those skills and experiences into public sector terms.

community and the job. The applicant then needs to prove that he or she is knowledgeable about the requirements and is the best person for the job by linking job requirements to specific and relevant life experiences. Kroeger was not hired by someone with private sector experience, but he was able to communicate his experiences in a way that meant something to those in the public sector. He recommends that professionals who are interested in entering local government have a clear understanding of the dynamics of working in a political environment. To gain this understanding, he recommends interviewing people in the profession. Kroeger cautions that breaking into local government may be easier in certain areas, such as engineering and finance, because the technical skills needed in those areas are easily transferrable. However, breaking into areas such as community development may be impossible unless the aspirant begins in a lower-level position.

Guidance for Hiring from the Private Sector

Kroeger found that consulting gave him a great background because it involves an analytical sense and problem-solving skills. He thinks organizations can train people, so hiring for attitude is key, and he looks for people with a good head on their shoulders who can adapt to changing expectations and situations. His experience with his public sector mentor highlights the importance of individual managers in helping people break into local government. Public sector managers should work to recruit excellent candidates, even those candidates come from the private sector.

Coming *BACK* to Local Government

Adam Lenhard
City Manager of Clearfield City, UT (pop. 30,618)

Adam Lenhard first entered local government in 2003 after graduating with a bachelor's degree in land use/planning from Brigham Young University, where he worked in planning/engineering for the public sector until 2006 when his city administrator was fired. He moved to the private sector but returned to the public sector in 2011 after earning his MPA.

Impetus for Change

While in the private sector, Lenhard worked in site planning and design. But as construction slowed with land development/housing during the Great Recession, he decided it was time to return to the public sector for his family's financial security.

Similarities and Differences

Local government has more structure than the private sector, and Lenhard says that his work in the public sector has felt more stable; however, this is something that has taken some getting used to, and he cautions that that feeling of stability can change at any time. The biggest difference in his return to the public sector—first in community development and now as city manager—is in the variety of things to do. His understanding of city ordinances, land use policies and negotiation were all skills that made his transition smoother, and he considers the breadth of issues and the challenges that local government offers to be an advantage: "I am exposed to many different learning opportunities." However, he speaks about the

> "One major difference is being on call all the time. Work-life balance is a challenge."

> "[Local government management] has stretched me in many ways and helped me realize that I'm capable of making tough decisions."

difficulty in adjusting to the red tape that is ever-present in local government, about always being under the public's watchful eye, and about a somewhat lower earning potential. "One major difference is being on call all the time. Work-life balance is a challenge"

Evaluation of Change

The most rewarding part of this career for Lenhard has been developing relationships with other local government managers. He also feels that the opportunity to be the boss and the responsibility of being the boss have had a great impact on his working life. "It has stretched me in many ways and helped me realize that I'm capable of making tough decisions."

His advice to others learning from his experience is," Bring other people into the process. Don't rush to judgment. Learn as much as you can, but once you know the right (best) answer, act quickly and see it all the way through."

Guidance to Others Considering Local Government Career

Lenhard credits much of his success to his good fortune of having a mentor. "I'd like to think my skills and abilities would have eventually qualified me for this job without that guidance, but I can't imagine it would have happened this quickly." He cautions those in the private sector who are considering local

government as a career to fully consider the challenges it contains. "It's not for everyone," he says. It is important for people in public service to have a passion for helping others. Lenhard would encourage new managers to be sure to try and hire the best people possible who are intelligent and have the necessary expertise to make a real difference for the communities they serve.

Coming from the Nonprofit Sector

Maria Hurtado
Assistant City Manager, Tracy, CA (2012 est. pop. 84,699)

After obtaining her bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) and her master's degree in social work from San Jose State University, Maria Hurtado, a self-identified Mexican American, entered the nonprofit sector working for various organizations, including a domestic violence agency, a drug and alcohol counseling agency, and a women's residential program. This is where her exposure to local government began.

Hurtado's nonprofit sector work centered primarily on funding (as a recipient), on interagency collaboration (while coordinating services with municipalities and other service providers), and on interaction with elected officials (while advocating for her organization).

"I could not have made the transition to local government and reached the position I currently hold were it not for a number of people in local government looking beyond the degree and understanding how my transferrable skills would benefit that organization's goals and that community. It was the "soft" skills, and commitment to continuous learning and strong work ethic that allowed me to progress in local government."

Impetus for Change

Hurtado had not planned to move from the nonprofit sector to local government. She took advantage of an opportunity that presented itself to utilize her network, skill set and program development experience learned in the non-profit sector and use those assets to assist a local municipality expand their services to a wider community. Hurtado said, "It was the combination of what I learned at home, the experiences I had outside the home, the exposure to formal education, and the significant mentors who ultimately launched me into a career in local government that has made seeking the public good second nature to me." Watsonville, California, the local jurisdiction that hired her as assistant director of parks and neighborhood services (her first local government job), was primarily seeking candidates with

experience providing untraditional youth programs for high-risk youth and collaborating with nonprofits while addressing specific neighborhood and social issues. In particular, the community was facing challenges with gang issues, as well as perceived inequities with regard to political access and representation; this was exacerbated by its history of council district elections.

Hurtado's background in the nonprofit sector, her experience developing and implementing programs for high-risk youth, and her relationships formed through working with and on various collaborative interagency teams (which included numerous municipal officials), as well as her ability to effectively reach out the Latino community, distinguished her from other candidates and provided the skill set required for the position and community.

Similarities and Differences

Hurtado finds that administration in both the nonprofit and local government sectors require similar skills, including budgeting and financial management, personnel/labor relations, economic development, strategic planning/goal setting for a council/board of directors, project management, and understanding intergovernmental and community partnerships. In addition, work in both sectors equally requires a significant time commitment to attend evening and/or weekend events/meetings as well as to maintain regular office hours.

On the other hand, Hurtado sees the most prevalent differences between local government and the nonprofit sector to be the degree of funding stability inherent in each sector, the amount of administrative support, and the ease (or lack thereof) of program and/or project implementation. In all three cases, she felt that the advantage lay with the local government sector, which enjoyed (at the time she entered the field) funding stability; provided expanded administrative resources and support, such as legal, human resources, information technology, and finance staff (all of which were less accessible to her in the non-

profit sector); and had more flexible grant and report writing requirements.

Alternatively, Hurtado feels that the primary advantage to working in the nonprofit sector is that nonprofits typically have limited layers of bureaucracy. In comparison to local government, this limited bureaucracy provides for faster program/project implementation, more "hands-on" direct service delivery, and flexibility with service delivery options (which are affected by unionization in the local government sector).

Evaluation of Change

The biggest challenge Hurtado faced in acclimating to local government was staying apolitical and understanding the complexity of municipal government and service delivery. As an executive director in the nonprofit sector, one of her cardinal duties was to develop relationships with elected officials and advocate for funding needs. As a municipal administrator, however, she had to adjust her approach to working with elected officials to fit the appointed nature of her position.

Working to understand the complexity of municipal service delivery, Hurtado notes, took time but that time was bridged by her taking on projects related to the many facets of local government (such as water/wastewater utility service, public safety, land use issues, and social recreational programs), using professional networks/colleagues, and participating in professional organizations (such ICMA and Cal-ICMA.).

When determining whether to move from the nonprofit sector to local government, Hurtado was primarily concerned with whether the work would be rewarding and meaningful, and whether she would feel as though she were making a contribution and a difference in that role. Ultimately, she believes that the most rewarding element of working in both sectors is being able to provide quality services to the community.

Guidance to Others Considering a Local Government Career

Hurtado would encourage anyone in the nonprofit sector who is interested in public service to consider working for local government. Like the nonprofit sector, she contends, working in local government requires a great affinity for public service, customer service, problem solving, fostering partnerships, and making a difference in the community.

She believes that having a mentor and developing a network of colleagues was critical in her ultimate success, not just in the beginning of her career but throughout its entirety. She also believes that local governments and ICMA can create greater opportunities for nontraditional career tracks (non-MPAs) by continuing to offer programs like the Emerging Leaders Program.

Coming from the Military

DJ Gehrt
City Manager, Platte City,
MO (2010 pop. 4,691)

D J Gehrt comes to the public sector after eight years of service in the military. He completed a master's of public administration degree at the University of Virginia. He has moved from coast to coast and now is a manager in the Midwest.

> "It took some persuading of the leadership which was a little intimidated by a potential candidate with a strong military background."

Impetus for Change

Gehrt had just left the military and his wife was still on active duty. Needing a career that would allow him to move frequently, he looked to the local government sector. He started by working in various departments and has since specialized in solid-waste management.

Similarities and Differences

When reflecting on the differences and similarities between the military and local government, Gehrt says Marine Corps officers have an engrained code of ethics that has been tested countless times and that he still relies on his military training as this makes him more comfortable making difficult decisions regardless of the personal consequences that may result.

Moreover, "communication is absolutely critical to any decision we make." Focusing on citizen engagement. Gehrt adds, "Communication in the local government process means communicating and including citizens in the decision-making process, not simply communicating to them a decision after it has been made."

As for differences, Gehrt further notes that Marine infantry officers never have the luxury of saying "that's not my job." "While on active duty, if I was in charge of training for a week, I was expected to manage every aspect of that training regardless of my training or background. This included *all* logistical and administrative requirements, as well as the training exercise itself."

Gehrt notes three things that may hinder a veteran in his or her approach to working in local government. The first is dealing with budgeting and finance. "Rarely would I ever deal with financial issues as a

Marine, and certainly not at the level that is required of a city manager." Second is the communication with elected officials. Company-grade officers almost never interact with elected officials and certainly not at the local level. Finally, military veterans do not come out of the service with a proper appreciation of representative democracy as a concept, in terms of dealing with elected officials and citizens they serve. "The general mentality from the military that I have observed is that they think that, because of their principled training, they have all the answers and that elected officials should just let them do what they believe to be right." Gehrt says that this attitude flies in the face of the concept that managers in local government are working for the citizens.

Evaluation of Change

The most valuable transferrable skill for Gehrt was the willingness to take on any task set before him. This skill was honed as an infantry officer and served him particularly well during his time working for local government in different areas of specialization.

When asked what has been most rewarding about the transition, Gehrt says that working in local government is a continuation of public service. It is also an interesting way to develop an understanding of representative democracy at a basic level. "Because of the impact of social media, society has become much more splintered. I enjoy having an opportunity to lead

> "Democracy is far messier than the structured environment that Marines are used to, but it is the system that they defended while in uniform."

a well-run city that provides basic services well." He continued, "Democracy is far messier than the structured environment that Marines are used to, but it is the system that they defended while in uniform."

Guidance to Others Considering a Career in Local Government

Gehrt notes that having health insurance through the military is a selling point for local governments that are downsizing, and that there are great opportunities to recruit veterans who may not have considered local government as a career. He says that ICMA should reach out at the national level to see if the Department of Defense/Veteran's Administration would allow it to participate in its Transition Assistance Program. He further advises that "those military veterans who have made a successful transition to local government should be encouraged to maintain contact with their peers remaining on active duty." This would not only encourage active-duty peers to counsel subordinates leaving the military regarding local government jobs but also set up peers who are leaving the military to consider local government careers. Though the transition wasn't without challenges, "It took some persuading of the leadership which was a little intimidated by a potential candidate with a strong military background."

Coming from the Military

Clint Holmes
City Manager of Brown City, MI (2010 pop. 1,325)

As the city manager of Brown City, Michigan, for nearly fifteen years, Clint Holmes has directly applied three years of service in the Army and seventeen years of service in the Navy to the core tasks of municipal management in a rural environment: problem-solving, customer service, and communication with key stakeholders.

Impetus for Change

In his own words, Holmes "developed an interest in local government while serving on active duty in the Navy and attending Auburn University to obtain an MPA." According to Holmes, this interest was confirmed by a brief internship in Layton, Utah (2010 pop. 67,311) in 1997. Shortly thereafter, Holmes read an article in *PM* magazine about a city manager who had followed the standard career path and had transitioned from a larger organization to a small community, only to be surprised at how his previous experience had not fully prepared him for his role as manager of a smaller community. After reading the article, Holmes decided that he wanted to work in a smaller community and that "even with the attendant risks, rather than trying to move up through a larger organization, [it was] a better fit for me." Accordingly, upon his retirement from the Navy in 1998, Holmes conducted a six-week job search for a management position in a small community, which culminated in his appointment in Brown City.

Similarities and Differences

Holmes notes that while he was transitioning into the local government profession, his military background enhanced his ability to "research and analyze a situation, coordinate a reasonable response, and then resolve the issue" in response to the demands of the position to "very quickly gain a level of expertise on a very wide range of issues and concerns."

While acclimating to the local government profession, however, Holmes notes that he faced challenges in identifying the informal chain of command, determining the competency and reliability of contractors and engineers, and adapting to the governmental budgeting process, which initially demanded "many very long days."

In addition, according to Holmes, projects tend to "move much faster in the military." This slower speed of progress is counterbalanced, he says, by the fact that "few occupations [in comparison to municipal management] have results that are potentially as long lasting," such as a major streetscape project he managed during his tenure with Brown City.

> "My military background is very helpful in providing the experience to be able to research and analyze a situation, coordinate a reasonable response, and then resolve the issue."

Evaluation of Change

Notwithstanding the differences between military service and municipal management, Holmes believes that "the fit for prior military in retail government is a good one" and that any individual with military experience who is considering the local government profession should be advised that "knowledge and expertise in a subject [in local government] is generally more important than rank."

Holmes also believes that military experience provides the requisite skills to facilitate communication between interest groups and stakeholders in a government environment, in which building long-lasting

relationships can be easier than it is in the military. Such communication, Holmes notes, is critical when responding to residents who can be adamant and vocal in making their concerns known.

Guidance for Applicants Looking to Break into Local Government

According to Holmes, his military background distinguished him from other job applicants and provided him with the necessary skills (including the ability to take charge of situations, prioritize, and focus on the mission) to transition into a management role in a smaller community. Coincidentally, the mayor who interviewed Holmes had served one enlistment in the military, and Holmes feels that his military background made "a positive impact on the group and was a significant plus."

Ultimately, Holmes would encourage any individual with a military background to consider local government, noting that "being a city manager is like being a unit commander, the goal of virtually every officer and senior NCO [noncommissioned officer]" and that he was "amazed at the amount of overlap"

between the military and municipal management. For example, Holmes states that "staff work is staff work" and observes that both professions consist of core challenges: responding to complex demands in visible roles in condensed spans of time; determining and supporting the overall needs of the organization in accordance with the mission; and contributing to the betterment of society in a lasting, tangible manner.

Guidance for Hiring from the Military

To reach individuals with a military background, Holmes believes that the ICMA and state-based organizations should focus on providing educational materials to individuals in the military who are nearing retirement and entering retirement training, a final stage of service that occurs prior to reentry to civilian life. In their efforts to reach out to such individuals in the same manner that they reach out to students or young professionals, Holmes feels "confident" that ICMA's program coordinators would welcome the opportunity to receive and implement the use of such transition resources and materials.

William B. Horne II, ICMA-CM

City Manager, Clearwater, FL
(2012 est. pop. 108,732)

Case Study:

Coming from the Military

As the city manager of Clearwater for over a decade, William Horne has translated his military experience as a base commander into the core tasks of municipal management in a beachfront community. The transferable skills from his military career were budgeting/finance leadership, communication, problem solving, and planning.

Impetus for Change

Horne has always been attracted to public service, and he believes that this attraction had been reinforced in the military. After his military career, Holmes felt that his experience was very closely aligned with that of a municipal management career. But he also understood that he needed to gain experience in a local government setting. To this end, he sought and secured the position of general services support administrator for the City of Clearwater.

Similarities and Differences

When preparing his résumé for the position of city manager, Horne stayed away from military jargon and used descriptions that translated themselves into the public sector. In so doing, he was able to convey clearly the similarities between his military experience and local government management. The military had shown him how to get projects done and get them done right, an ability he found to be equally important in the public sector. He also notes, "My military background provided an immediate establishment of credibility as a professional manager/leader with years of experience that was valued."

One major difference, however, was that his public sector experience taught him how a democracy works and how messy it can be.

Evaluation of Change

While acclimating to the local government profession, Horne encountered challenges, both internal—such

> "This job is not only about hard work, but [also about] relationship, relationship, relationship. We underestimate the importance of relationships."

as learning to work in a political environment with elected officials and being able to influence people without the military hierarchical structure—and external, such as dealing with the aggressive print media. At the same time, however, he found that he was able to cope with the media and elected officials by developing relationships. "This job is not only about hard work, but [also about] relationship, relationship, relationship. We underestimate the importance of relationships."

Guidance for Military Personnel Considering a Career in Local Government

Despite these challenges, Horne would encourage anyone from the military to consider a career in local government. But he noted that it truly must begin with a desire for public service. If an individual is concerned with money and material objects, the public sector is not the place. Additionally, he did not have a mentor, and he thinks that having one would help a career changer coming from the military adapt more quickly to a nonmilitary environment.

Opal Mauldin-Robertson
City Manager, Lancaster, TX
(2012 est. pop. 37,845)

Case Study:

Coming from the Federal Government

Before working for the City of Lancaster—although she did not move far geographically—Opal Mauldin-Robertson worked in a very different world: Capitol Hill, where she represented members of Congress on federal issues. For the past ten years, Mauldin-Robertson has been applying the unique skills she gained in Washington to local issues in Lancaster. And she advises others considering a career in local government that "your skills are transferable and you shouldn't be afraid to demonstrate those skills."

Impetus for Change

While working for a member of Congress, Mauldin-Robertson was advised to go back and get a master's degree. She was unaware at the time that that advice would change her career trajectory. One of her professors was the mayor of the City of Arlington, Texas and he discussed how each city service can affect a large number of citizens. This resonated with Mauldin-Robertson: "I have a service heart and wanted to give back in my community." That is when she decided she wanted to be a local government manager.

After the first year of her MPA, Mauldin-Robertson got her first job with Lancaster as the community relations coordinator and public information officer, where she was tasked with expanding Lancaster's presence.

Similarities and Differences

Working for members of Congress prepared Mauldin-Robertson for local government in unexpected ways. "In graduate school you are taught that policy is over here and administration is over there, but in practice, you are dealing with politics all the time," she says. "When working for a politician, everything you do is politics and every citizen is a voter." This perspective has helped her look at

> "You own what takes place in your community and you are never off duty. Everywhere you go you are at work because you are always the city manager."

situations from the council's perspective, and she is always thinking in the back of her mind, how does the public perceive/receive that service?

Another similarity between local and federal government is the lack of job security. She finds that knowing how to balance that uncertainty is critical.

As for differences, Mauldin-Robertson found that when working for members of Congress, she could leave the office and be off duty, but that is not possible for her as a city manager. "You own what takes place in your community and you are never off duty. Everywhere you go you are at work because you are always the city manager." She says that managers must consciously make time for their families because work will try to follow them anywhere.

Evaluation of Change

Mauldin-Robertson had to be persistent when applying for her first job in local government. While her application was initially rejected, she followed up with a résumé and a PowerPoint presentation describing exactly how her skills would transfer. Within four years she was the assistant city manager, and four years after that she became the city manager. She attributes her success on the job to her determination and hard work: "I volunteered for everything," she says.

Guidance for Federal Employees Considering a Career in Local Government

Mauldin-Robertson emphatically encourages others working for the federal government to consider transitioning into local government, which makes them excellent candidates for local government jobs. Thus, they must not be afraid to demonstrate their skills and be aggressive in pursuit of their goals.

> "I have a service heart and wanted to give back in my community."

Coming from the Federal Government/State Government

Aaron Otto
City Administrator, Roeland Park, KS (2012 est. pop. 6,816)

Aaron Otto has been the city administrator of Roeland Park, Kansas, since 2011. Prior to entering local government, Otto worked in both state and federal government. Graduating from George Washington University with an MPA in 2000, Otto entered the Department of the Navy and worked in Chief Naval Operations. In 2004, he entered state government in Kansas, working first in the governor's office and then in the treasurer's office. His previous experience with local government had simply been through his interaction from the state level.

Impetus for Change

Otto moved to local government after the 2008 election, when the administration at the state level began to change hands. His interest in local government was partially peaked by his desire to stay local. The city administrator position in the town where Otto resided opened up for the first time in fifteen years, and he took an opportunity to give back and make an impact on the neighbors surrounding him.

Similarities and Differences

Otto notes that improvements in the lives of citizens are much more visible at the local level. The challenge, he says, is that people have come to expect local government to perform at a very high level, and when confronted with an economic downturn

> "[C]itizen concerns are much different [at the local level]. These concerns are the most important issue for that citizen at that time. Our service delivery impacts their lives on a daily basis."

> "The employees in local government are some of the hardest-working people—and they have to be because people would notice if they weren't."

and budget constraints, people do not like to give up services. "At the state level, citizens are primarily concerned about big picture policy issues. For the local government, citizen concerns are much different. These concerns are the most important issue for that citizen at that time. Our service delivery impacts their lives on a daily basis."

Evaluation of Change

Otto believes that local government has stretched its purpose in a positive manner to meet the needs of citizens. He is most impressed with the industry's ability to constantly meet the level of service requested by citizens and the employees' ability to do more with less. "The employees in local government are some of the hardest-working people—and they have to be because people would notice if they weren't." Otto is most concerned, however, about "the level of specialization and technical ability a city administrator needed to possess. It turns out that I can lean on my staff as well as my own research and learning to meet that technical need." Asked about the most rewarding part of his transition, Otto cites the ability to see changes happen in the lives of citizens at a quicker pace on the local government level than on the state or federal levels of government. Otto reports that red tape and layers in local government are often smaller because of the lack of resources. This, of course, has some good impacts and some negative impacts.

Guidance to Others Considering a Local Government Career

Otto suggested that anyone transitioning to local government should find a mentor. He had people he knew from the state and federal experiences who were able to help him sound out ideas and thoughts about better ways to serve his community.

Otto wants to encourage others to enter local government management because it is a great way to have a meaningful impact on others. He notes that the pace is certainly strenuous at times and that the manager or administrator is often "on the clock." He encourages those entering the profession to be sure to find small ways to plan ahead for the future. "We have less time in this field to plan and be deliberate about every decision. That makes it important to think about different situations before they happen. In local government, issues move forward very quickly."

"Take initiative and reach out to other local government managers. Take them to lunch…learn from their experiences. They will learn from you too."

Otto encourages ICMA and those in local government to look closely at recruiting military personnel who serve as garrison commanders. These commanders often run bases with infrastructure and other issues that are very similar to local government management. "At [age] 40 or 50, many of these individuals are ready to retire and looking for another career. Local government would be a great place for them to land."

The ICMA Code of Ethics

At the very core of ICMA is the mission to promote an ethical culture in local government. Since the development of the ICMA Code of Ethics in 1924, the organization has built an extensive collection of advice on ethics issues, case studies and model local government documents. This knowledge base has been translated into training courses, consulting services and ethics textbooks and other educational publications designed to further the organization's mission throughout the world.

Promoting an ethical culture is a key leadership responsibility. Equity, transparency, honor, integrity, commitment, and stewardship are standards for excellence in democratic local governance. ICMA promotes ethical conduct through its Code of Ethics, training for local governments, publications on ethics issues, technical assistance, and advice to members.

The dues-supported work of the ICMA Executive Board's Committee on Professional Conduct in investigating and censuring those who act unethically is fundamental to ICMA's efforts to ensure that every member is respected as a professional. Members hold themselves to high standards and look to ICMA to promote the values of the profession and to provide education, training, and consistent enforcement.

A Foundation on Ethics

Adopted in 1924, the ICMA Code of Ethics defined the principles that today serve as the foundation for the local government management profession and set the standard for excellence. Leadership in a management structure committed to equity, transparency, integrity, stewardship of public resources, political neutrality, and respect for the rights and responsibility of elected officials and residents strengthens democratic local governance. ICMA members pledge to uphold these principles in their conduct and decisions in order to merit the trust of the public, elected officials, and staff they serve. As a condition of membership, ICMA members agree to submit to a peer-to-peer review under established enforcement procedures should there be an allegation of unethical conduct.

ICMA's Code of Ethics, most recently amended by the membership in 1998 to reflect changes in the profession, includes Guidelines to assist members in applying the principles outlined in the Code. The Guidelines were adopted by the ICMA Executive Board in 1972 and most recently revised in July 2004. Individuals seeking advice on ethics issues or enforcement are encouraged to contact Martha Perego, ICMA's director of ethics at 202-962-3668 or email mperego@icma.org.

Training and Technical Assistance Services

For information about local government ethics workshops and technical assistance services, call the ICMA Ethics Center at 202-962-3521. Workshops on such topics as Ethics at Work!, Promoting an Ethical Culture, The Leader's Role in Building an Ethical Culture, and Elected Officials and the Public Trust are available for staff, leadership, elected officials, boards, and commissions.

The mission of ICMA is to create excellence in local governance by developing and fostering professional local government management worldwide. To further this mission, certain principles, as enforced by the Rules of Procedure, shall govern the conduct of every member of ICMA, who shall:

Tenet 1
Be dedicated to the concepts of effective and democratic local government by responsible elected officials and believe that professional general management is essential to the achievement of this objective.

Tenet 2
Affirm the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government and maintain a constructive, creative, and practical attitude toward local government affairs and a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant.

Tenet 3

Be dedicated to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in all public and personal relationships in order that the member may merit the respect and confidence of the elected officials, of other officials and employees, and of the public.

Tenet 4

Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all people.

Tenet 5

Submit policy proposals to elected officials; provide them with facts and advice on matters of policy as a basis for making decisions and setting community goals; and uphold and implement local government policies adopted by elected officials.

Tenet 6

Recognize that elected representatives of the people are entitled to the credit for the establishment of local government policies; responsibility for policy execution rests with the members.

Tenet 7

Refrain from all political activities which undermine public confidence in professional administrators. Refrain from participation in the election of the members of the employing legislative body.

Tenet 8

Make it a duty continually to improve the member's professional ability and to develop the competence of associates in the use of management techniques.

Tenet 9

Keep the community informed on local government affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and all local government officers; emphasize friendly and courteous service to the public; and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.

Tenet 10

Resist any encroachment on professional responsibilities, believing the member should be free to carry out official policies without interference, and handle each problem without discrimination on the basis of principle and justice.

Tenet 11

Handle all matters of personnel on the basis of merit so that fairness and impartiality govern a member's decisions, pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline.

Tenet 12

Seek no favor; believe that personal aggrandizement or profit secured by confidential information or by misuse of public time is dishonest.

For the full ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines, please see the appendix.

Career Changers: Profiles based on Survey Research and Data Analyses

In March 2013, a survey was sent to 313 ICMA members who had self-identified as career changers in a 2008 survey on retirement and succession planning. In that earlier survey the member indicated a work history that included a career change to local government management, with a past career in state government, a nonprofit, the private sector, or the military.

In the current survey, we asked respondents to draw upon their career experience to help the ICMA Task Force on Breaking into Local Government prepare this resource for other career changers planning to enter the local government management profession.

The 2013 survey had 126 respondents, giving it a 40.3% response rate. A demographic summary of respondents follows:

Preceding Career

Military	12%
Private sector	48%
State Government	5%
Federal Government	5%
Non-profit sector	10%
Other	20%

Past Military Service:

Yes	24%
No	76%

Gender

Male	81%
Female	19%

Age Range
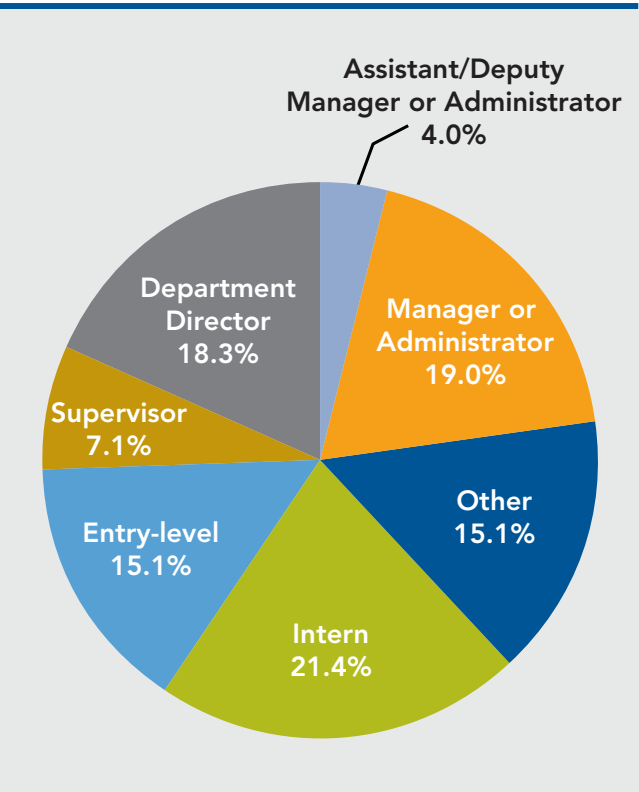
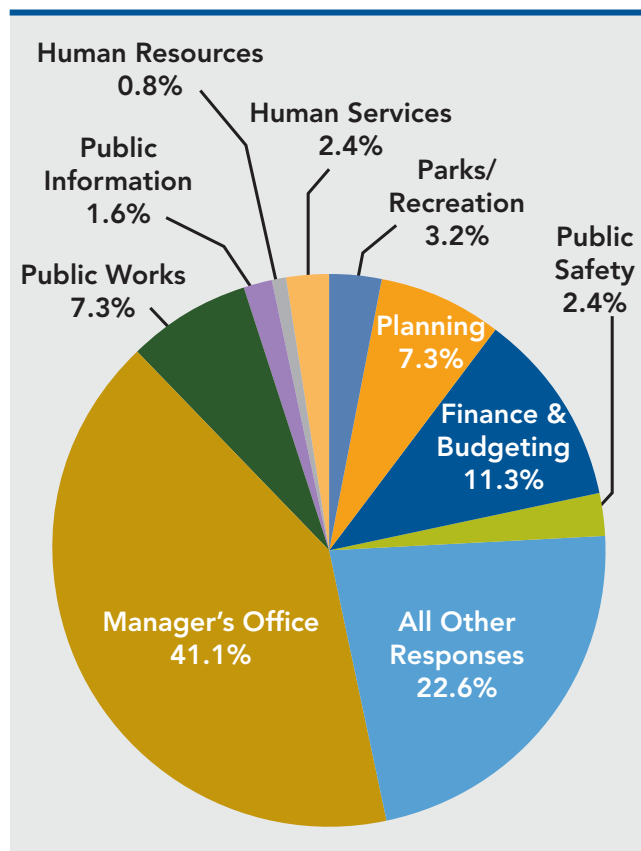|	
30–39	3%
40–49	19%
50–59	44%
60+	34%

Paths to and within Local Government

There are many paths one can take to enter the local government profession. More than one-third (36.5%) of respondents to our 2013 survey started out with an internship or other entry-level position, while most of the other career changers started in local government at a supervisory or managerial level (see Graphic A). As shown in Graphic B, many surveyed career changers (41%) began in the manager's office.

Graphic A First position held in local government

Assistant/Deputy Manager or Administrator 4.0%
Manager or Administrator 19.0%
Other 15.1%
Intern 21.4%
Entry-level 15.1%
Supervisor 7.1%
Department Director 18.3%

Graphic B Other departments in which career changers began in local government

Human Resources 0.8%
Human Services 2.4%
Public Information 1.6%
Parks/Recreation 3.2%
Public Works 7.3%
Public Safety 2.4%
Planning 7.3%
Finance & Budgeting 11.3%
Manager's Office 41.1%
All Other Responses 22.6%

Graphic C Current positions of career changers

Assistant/Deputy Manager or Administrator 15.2%
Department Director 2.4%
Other 15.2%
Manager or Administrator 67.2%

We sought to determine how career changers may have changed positions over time. As shown in Graphic C, over two-thirds of the surveyed professionals are currently in the role of manager or administrator, while Graphic D shows the areas within local government where career changers can be found.

The private sector appears to be the sector from which most surveyed career changers left to enter local government, while about half as many career changers entered from the military. Graphic E identifies the sectors from which career changers previously were employed.
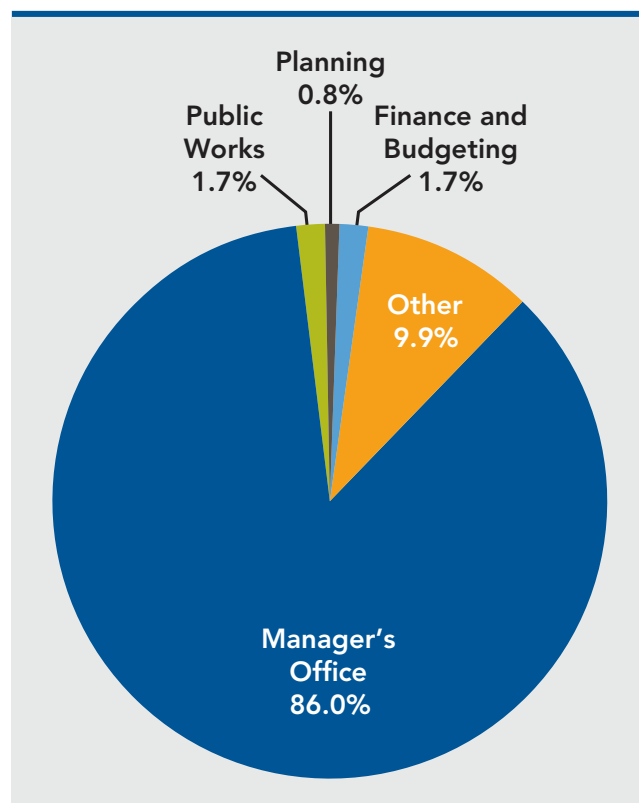
Skill Sets of Career Changers

General management skills appear the most common skill set that career changers bring with them to local government (Graphic F). One in ten respondents have skills in finance, which—given contemporary economic conditions—are clearly beneficial to the profession. Among other areas of skills not shown on this graph include social work, planning, and construction management.
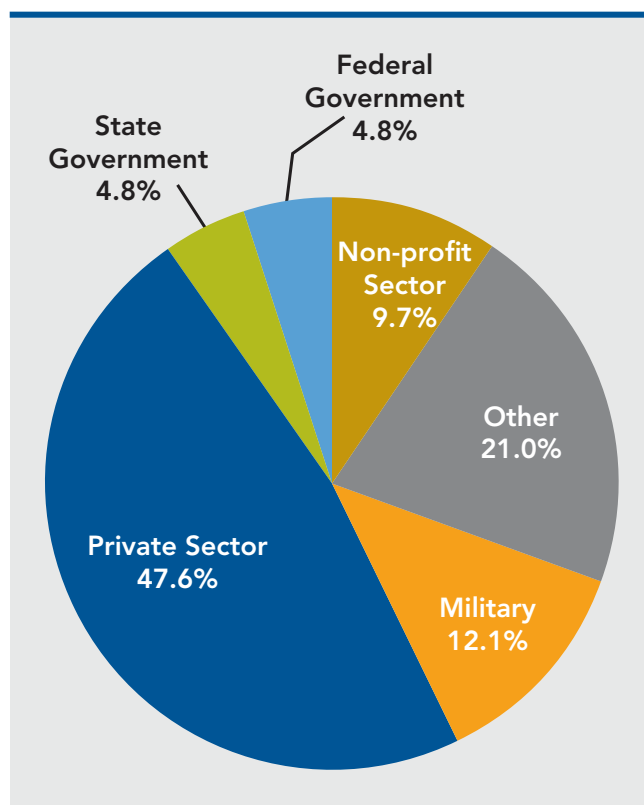
Graphic D Other departments in which career changers are now working

Planning 0.8%
Public Works 1.7%
Finance and Budgeting 1.7%
Other 9.9%
Manager's Office 86.0%

Graphic E Previous sectors in which career changers were employed

- Federal Government 4.8%
- State Government 4.8%
- Non-profit Sector 9.7%
- Other 21.0%
- Private Sector 47.6%
- Military 12.1%
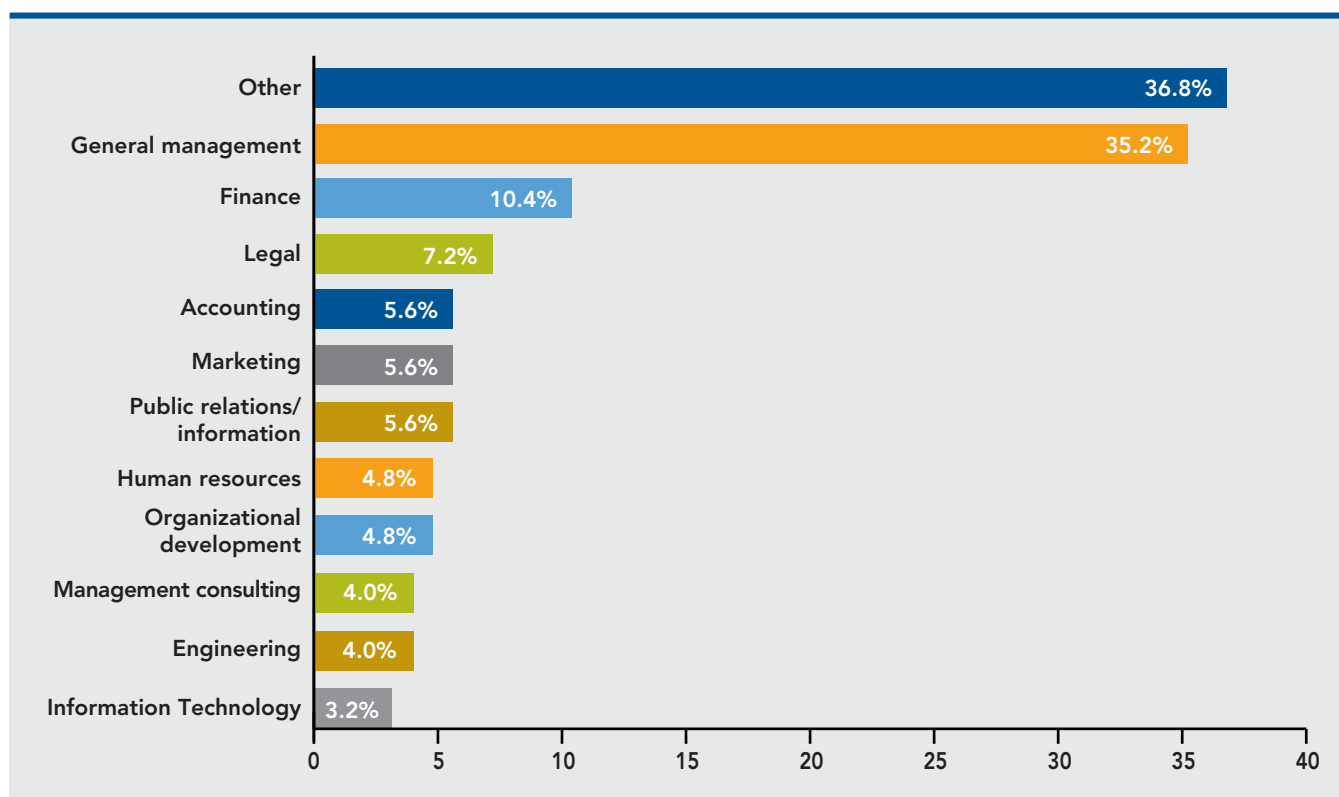
Transferable Skill Sets from Previous Careers

When asked, "What skill sets learned from your previous career were transferable or most helpful" during your transition to the public sector, a majority of respondents identified problem solving (80.3%), communication skills (79.5%), and leadership skills (64.8%) (see Graphic K); these were also the top three responses from the 2012 "ICMA Career Changer Survey Summary." Nearly half of the respondents in the current survey indicated that budget/finance (45.9%) and planning (42.6%) were also helpful skill sets in their transition.

Previous Career Experience and Reasons for Entering Local Government

Two-thirds of career changers remained in their previous careers for ten years or less (see Graphic G). Of interest, about 11% of respondents changed careers after twenty years spent in another profession. These data suggest that local government, at the management level, may be an attractive field for career changers.

Respondents were asked, "Why did you leave your previous career?"

Graphic F Common skill sets provided by career changers

Category	Percentage
Other	36.8%
General management	35.2%
Finance	10.4%
Legal	7.2%
Accounting	5.6%
Marketing	5.6%
Public relations/information	5.6%
Human resources	4.8%
Organizational development	4.8%
Management consulting	4.0%
Engineering	4.0%
Information Technology	3.2%

Nearly half of our respondents (46.3%) said they preferred to work in local government, while 12.2% said they no longer enjoyed their previous careers. This suggests that more than half of respondents made a conscious choice to work in local government (see Graphic H).
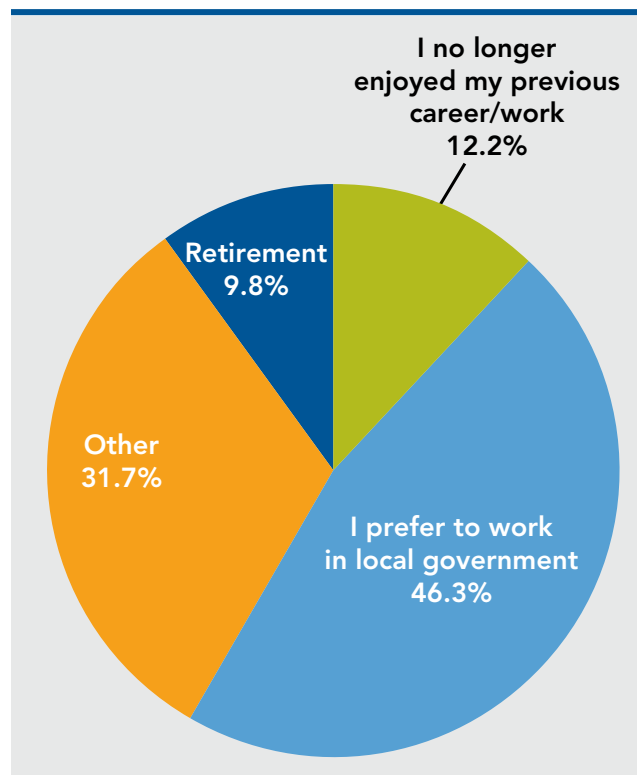
Additionally, approximately one-third (31.7%) of respondents specified other reasons for deciding to leave their previous careers. Respondents who selected this option expounded on their reasons; some of the more common reasons included the following:

- Local government position presented a career advancement opportunity
- Returning to graduate school to seek an advanced degree or MPA
- Laid off as a result of downsizing or a similar corporate financial difficulty
- Desire to work in the public sector
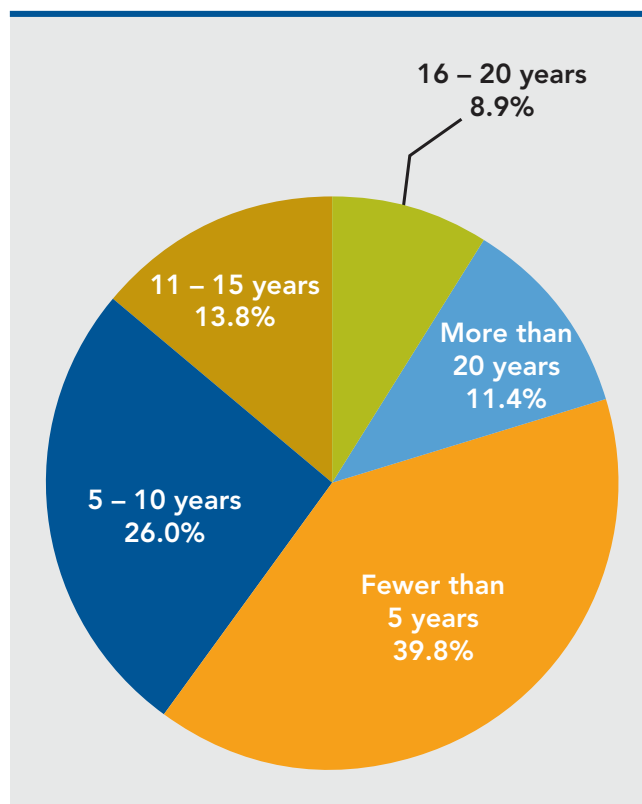- Better compensation and benefits

Respondents were asked, "Why did you decide to seek a career in local government?"

Of the 46.3 respondents who said they preferred to work in local government, a majority (58.1%) indicated that they made that career change because they
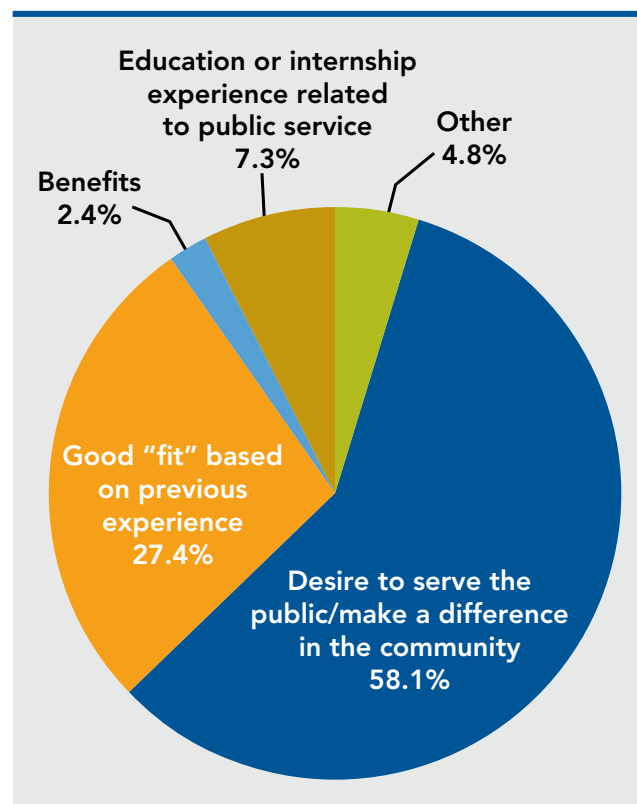
Graphic H   Why career changers left previous employment

I no longer enjoyed my previous career/work
12.2%

Retirement
9.8%

Other
31.7%

I prefer to work in local government
46.3%

Graphic G   Length of time in previous employment of career changers

16 – 20 years
8.9%

11 – 15 years
13.8%

More than 20 years
11.4%

5 – 10 years
26.0%

Fewer than 5 years
39.8%

Graphic I   Reasons career changers sought local government careers

Education or internship experience related to public service
7.3%

Benefits
2.4%

Other
4.8%

Good "fit" based on previous experience
27.4%

Desire to serve the public/make a difference in the community
58.1%

wanted to serve the public or make a difference in the community, whereas just over one-quarter (27.4%) felt that, given their previous work experience, a career in local government would be a good "fit" (see Graphic I).

Sources of Information about Local Government Careers

When asked, "How did you find out about careers in local government?," more than one-third of respondents (36.3%) said that they found such opportunities through their personal job search while nearly half indicated they found opportunities through their college/university (24.2%) or through someone they knew in local government (21.0%) (see Graphic J). Other responses included the following:

- Previous work experience in which local governments were their customers
- ICMA publications and websites, including the ICMA Newsletter and ICMA Job Announcements
- Running for, or holding, a public office as an elected official

About half of the respondents surveyed (50.9%) indicated they had a mentor from the public sector

Graphic J Finding careers in local government
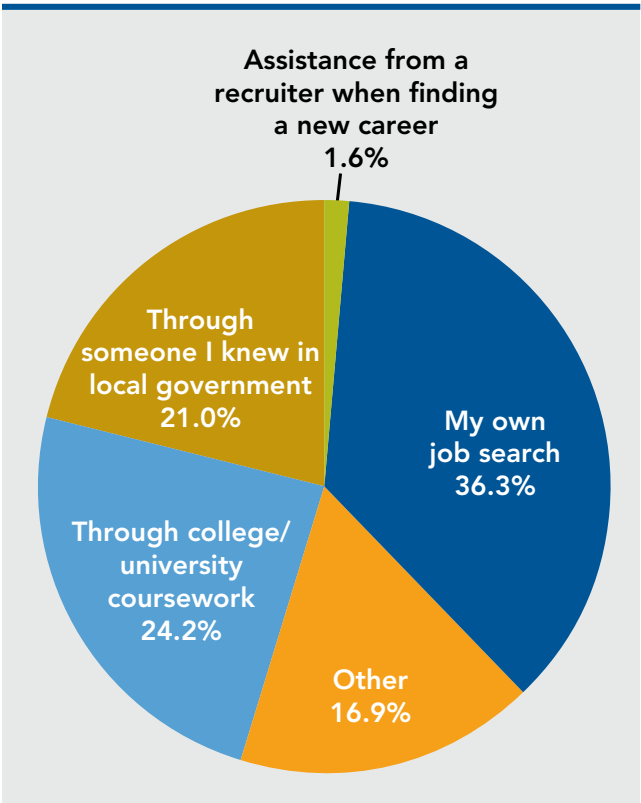
Graphic K Transferable skill sets from previous career
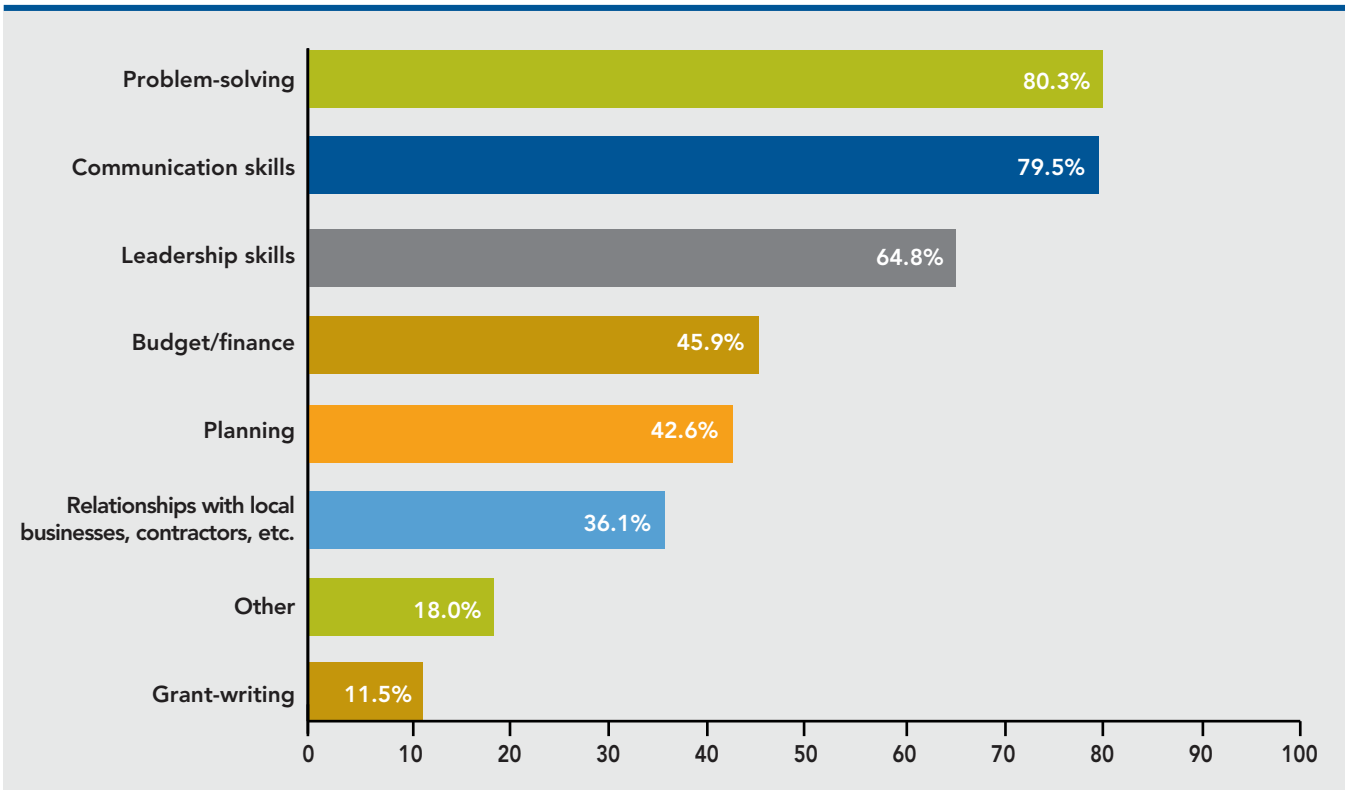
who helped them enter local government (not shown), which is slightly higher than the 45.9% who reported having been assisted by a mentor in the "ICMA Career Changer Survey Summary" (December 2012). The 2012 report also found that a majority of respondents without a mentor "believed having a mentor would have been beneficial." Of the 49.1% remaining respondents from the current survey who reported that they did not have a mentor, 58.6% indicated they would have liked to have one.

Obstacles to Working in Local Government

Respondents were also asked, "What was your biggest obstacle as you became acclimated to your position?" Over one-third of respondents (35%) cited learning to work in a political environment with elected officials as being the largest obstacle they encountered in acclimating to the position (see Graphic L). Following this popular response, respondents identified adjusting to the pace of government bureaucracy (17.9%), understanding the applicable statutes, laws, and regulations (13.8%), and dealing with residents on various issues (10.6%).
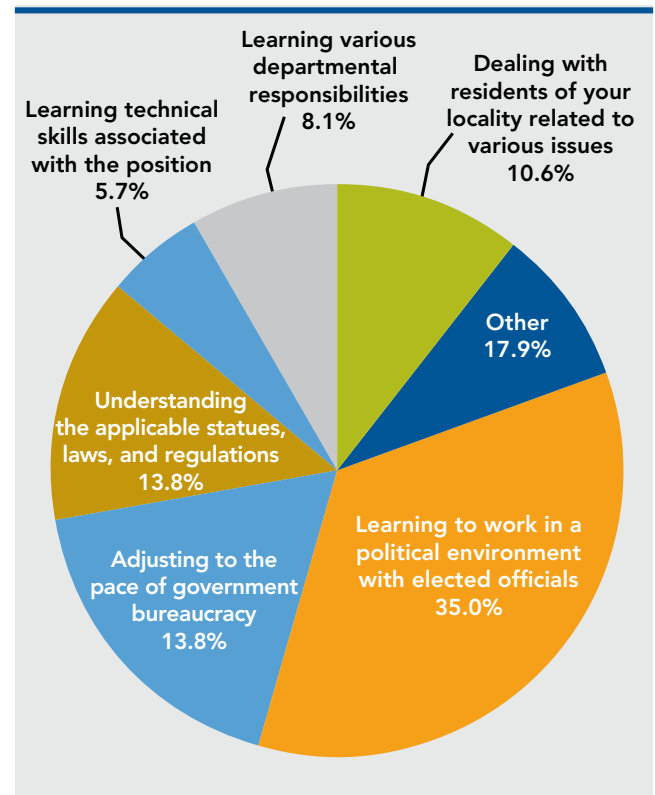
Respondents were also asked, "How did you overcome the obstacles you faced as you began your transition into public service?" A majority of respondents stated they relied on hard work, patience, perseverance, or some other character trait indicative of a flexible and adaptive management style to overcome obstacles they faced during their transition. Other respondents indicated they relied on a mentor or boss with military experience, while less than a handful of respondents indicated they did not face any obstacles.

In the 2012 test survey, nearly half (45.2%) of the respondents reported that they faced no obstacles during their transition to local government management. Of note, all respondents completing the 2012 survey had served in the military before beginning a career in local government.
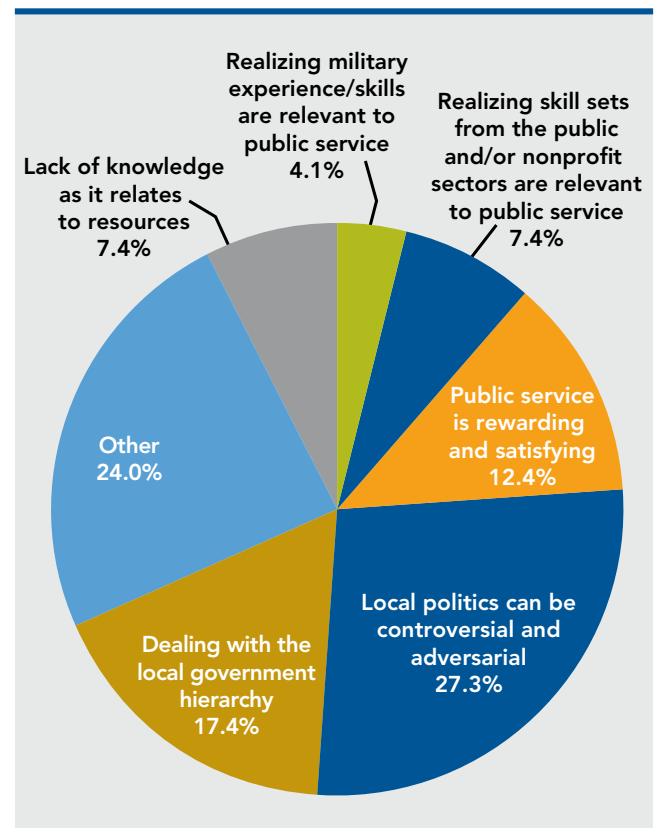
Benefits of Prior Military Experience

Respondents with military experience were asked, "How did your military experience help you obtain your current position?" Less than one-quarter (23.3%) of respondents stated their military experience did not help them in obtaining their current position in local government (not shown). All other respondents' statements revealed the following common themes:

Graphic L   Obstacles encountered

Learning various departmental responsibilities 8.1%

Dealing with residents of your locality related to various issues 10.6%

Learning technical skills associated with the position 5.7%

Other 17.9%

Understanding the applicable statues, laws, and regulations 13.8%

Learning to work in a political environment with elected officials 35.0%

Adjusting to the pace of government bureaucracy 13.8%

Graphic M   Obstacles encountered

Realizing military experience/skills are relevant to public service 4.1%

Realizing skill sets from the public and/or nonprofit sectors are relevant to public service 7.4%

Lack of knowledge as it relates to resources 7.4%

Public service is rewarding and satisfying 12.4%

Other 24.0%

Local politics can be controversial and adversarial 27.3%

Dealing with the local government hierarchy 17.4%

- Valuable skills acquired through military experience, including leadership, discipline, professionalism, problem solving, and analysis
- General positive attitude of local government officials toward individuals with military experience
- The location of a military operation or base in the vicinity of the local government

Most Surprising Observations in Local Government Career

Finally, when asked, "What has been most surprising to you during your career in local government?," over a quarter of the respondents (27.3%) cited the fact local politics can be controversial and adversarial (see Graphic M). Interestingly, most respondents surveyed selected responses that focused on the divisive aspects of the local government experience, such as the controversial nature of local politics and dealing with hierarchy in local government. Respondents who selected "Other" confirm this notion, with the following common themes in their open-ended responses:

- Conflict with and among elected officials
- Difficulty engaging/lack of interest from the general public
- Lack of quality public sector employees

Appendix

Additional Resources

1. Ashworth, Kenneth. *Caught between the Dog and the Fireplug, or How to Survive Public Service.* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001.

2. Benest, Frank, ed. *Preparing the Next Generation: A Guide for Current and Future Local Government Managers.* Washington, D.C.: ICMA, 2003. bookstore.icma.org/freedocs/E-43132.pdf.

3. Braga, Ann Hess. "Pay It Forward . . . Job Search Advice," *PA Times* (November 2006). www.publicservicecareers.org/index.asp?pageid = 560.

4. "Building a Career in Public Service." Public Service Careers website, 2008. www.publicservicecareers.org/?pageid = 515.

5. "Career Compass." Monthly column. icma.org/careercompass.

6. "Careers in Government Finance." Illinois Government Finance Officers Association website, N.d. www.igfoa.org/careersinlocalgovernment.html.

7. "Careers in Local Government Management." Revised 2010. icma.org/Wiki/Careers_in_Local_Government_Management.

8. Cohen, Steven, William Eimicke, and Tanya Heikkila. *The Effective Public Manager: Achieving Success in a Changing Government*. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2008.

9. Costello, Andrea, and Courtney Kleinert. "Emerging Leaders: How to Begin Your Career in Local Government," *PM* Magazine 88 (November 2006): 23–27. icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/1430/Emerging_Leaders_How_to_Begin_Your_Career_in_Local_Government.

10. "An Interview with Rod Gould." Public Administration website, 2013. www.publicadministration.net/an-interview-with-rod-gould/.

11. "Interview with Steve Thacker, City Manager of Centerville, Utah." Local Government Today website, February 28, 2012. localgovernmenttoday.blogspot.com/2012/02/interview-with-steve-thacker-city.html.

12. *Job Hunting Handbook for Local Government Professionals.* N.d. icma.org/jobhunting.

13. Krasna, Heather. *Jobs That Matter: Find a Stable, Fulfilling Career in Public Service*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Jist Works, 2010.

14. "Local Government Management: The Hottest Career You've Probably Never Heard Of." N.d. icma.org/en/Page/100092/Local_Government_Management_The_Hottest_Career_Youve_Probably_Never_Heard_Of.

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16. *The Next Generation Initiatives: A Collection of Articles from PM Magazine 2003–2012*. N.d. http://icma.org/pmnextgen.

17. Nihill, Kate. Careers in State and Local Government. Edited by Lisa D. Williams. Cambridge, Mass.: Bernard Koteen Office of Public Interest Advising Harvard Law School, 2009. www.law.harvard.edu/current/careers/opia/toolkit/guides/documents/statelocal_09.pdf

18. Management Internships: A Guidebook for Local Governments. icma.org/internships

Websites, Conferences, and Professional Development Resources

International City/County Management Association
icma.org

ICMA Career Network
icma.org/careers

ICMA Job Center
icma.org/en/icma/career_network/job_seekers/browse_jobs

State & County Associations
www.usa.gov

ICMA Knowledge Network
icma.org/kn

Alliance for Innovation
transformgov.org/en/home

ICMA Workshops and Online Learning
icma.org/workshops

ICMA Online Learning
learning.icma.org

Alliance for Innovation Calendar of Events and Trainings
transformgov.org/en/calendar

ICMA Military Veterans Group
icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/groups/kn/Group/1217/Military_Veterans

ICMA First Time Administrators Group
icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/groups/kn/Group/1013/First_Time_Administrators

ICMA Career Coaching Group
icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/groups/kn/Group/1111/Career_Coaching

ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines

The ICMA Code of Ethics was adopted by the ICMA membership in 1924, and most recently amended by the membership in May 1998. The Guidelines for the Code were adopted by the ICMA Executive Board in 1972, and most recently revised in July 2004.

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1. Be dedicated to the concepts of effective and democratic local government by responsible elected officials and believe that professional general management is essential to the achievement of this objective.

2. Affirm the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government and maintain a constructive, creative, and practical attitude toward local government affairs and a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant.

Guideline

- *Advice to Officials of Other Local Governments.* When members advise and respond to inquiries from elected or appointed officials of other local governments, they should inform the administrators of those communities.

3. Be dedicated to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in all public and personal relationships in order that the member may merit the respect and confidence of the elected officials, of other officials and employees, and of the public.

Guidelines

- *Public Confidence.* Members should conduct themselves so as to maintain public confidence in their profession, their local government, and in their performance of the public trust.

- *Impression of Influence.* Members should conduct their official and personal affairs in such a manner as to give the clear impression that they cannot be improperly influenced in the performance of their official duties.

- *Appointment Commitment.* Members who accept an appointment to a position should not fail to report for that position. This does not preclude the possibility of a member considering several offers or seeking several positions at the same time, but once a bona fide offer of a position has been accepted, that commitment should be honored. Oral acceptance of an employment offer is considered binding unless the employer makes fundamental changes in terms of employment.

- *Credentials.* An application for employment or for ICMA's Voluntary Credentialing Program should be complete and accurate as to all pertinent details of education, experience, and personal history. Members should recognize that both omissions and inaccuracies must be avoided.

- *Professional Respect.* Members seeking a management position should show professional respect for persons formerly holding the position or for others who might be applying for the same position. Professional respect does not preclude honest differences of opinion; it does preclude attacking a person's motives or integrity in order to be appointed to a position.

- *Reporting Ethics Violations.* When becoming aware of a possible violation of the ICMA Code of Ethics, members are encouraged to report the matter to ICMA. In reporting the matter, members may choose to go on record as the complainant or report the matter on a confidential basis.

- *Confidentiality.* Members should not discuss or divulge information with anyone about pending or completed ethics cases, except as specifically authorized by the Rules of Procedure for Enforcement of the Code of Ethics.

- *Seeking Employment.* Members should not seek employment for a position having an incumbent administrator who has not resigned or been officially informed that his or her services are to be terminated.

4. Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all of the people.

Guideline

- **Length of Service.** A minimum of two years generally is considered necessary in order to render a professional service to the local government. A short tenure should be the exception rather than a recurring experience. However, under special circumstances, it may be in the best interests of the local government and the member to separate in a shorter time. Examples of such circumstances would include refusal of the appointing authority to honor commitments concerning conditions of employment, a vote of no confidence in the member, or severe personal problems. It is the responsibility of an applicant for a position to ascertain conditions of employment. Inadequately determining terms of employment prior to arrival does not justify premature termination.

5. Submit policy proposals to elected officials; provide them with facts and advice on matters of policy as a basis for making decisions and setting community goals; and uphold and implement local government policies adopted by elected officials.

Guideline

- **Conflicting Roles.** Members who serve multiple roles—working as both city attorney and city manager for the same community, for example—should avoid participating in matters that create the appearance of a conflict of interest. They should disclose the potential conflict to the governing body so that other opinions may be solicited.

6. Recognize that elected representatives of the people are entitled to the credit for the establishment of local government policies; responsibility for policy execution rests with the members.

7. Refrain from all political activities which undermine public confidence in professional administrators. Refrain from participation in the election of the members of the employing legislative body.

Guidelines

- **Elections of the Governing Body.** Members should maintain a reputation for serving equally and impartially all members of the governing body of the local government they serve,

regardless of party. To this end, they should not engage in active participation in the election campaign on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for the governing body.

- **Elections of Elected Executives.** Members should not engage in the election campaign of any candidate for mayor or elected county executive.

- **Running for Office.** Members shall not run for elected office or become involved in political activities related to running for elected office. They shall not seek political endorsements, financial contributions or engage in other campaign activities.

- **Elections.** Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to vote and to voice their opinion on public issues. However, in order not to impair their effectiveness on behalf of the local governments they serve, they shall not participate in political activities to support the candidacy of individuals running for any city, county, special district, school, state or federal offices. Specifically, they shall not endorse candidates, make financial contributions, sign or circulate petitions, or participate in fund-raising activities for individuals seeking or holding elected office.

- **Elections in the Council-Manager Plan.** Members may assist in preparing and presenting materials that explain the council-manager form of government to the public prior to an election on the use of the plan. If assistance is required by another community, members may respond. All activities regarding ballot issues should be conducted within local regulations and in a professional manner.

- **Presentation of Issues.** Members may assist the governing body in presenting issues involved in referenda such as bond issues, annexations, and similar matters.

8. Make it a duty continually to improve the member's professional ability and to develop the competence of associates in the use of management techniques.

Guidelines

- **Self-Assessment.** Each member should assess his or her professional skills and abilities on a periodic basis.

- **Professional Development.** Each member should commit at least 40 hours per year to

professional development activities that are based on the practices identified by the members of ICMA.

9. Keep the community informed on local government affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and all local government officers; emphasize friendly and courteous service to the public; and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.

10. Resist any encroachment on professional responsibilities, believing the member should be free to carry out official policies without interference, and handle each problem without discrimination on the basis of principle and justice.

Guideline

- *Information Sharing.* The member should openly share information with the governing body while diligently carrying out the member's responsibilities as set forth in the charter or enabling legislation.

11. Handle all matters of personnel on the basis of merit so that fairness and impartiality govern a member's decisions, pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline.

Guideline

- *Equal Opportunity.* All decisions pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline should prohibit discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, political affiliation, disability, age, or marital status.

  It should be the members' personal and professional responsibility to actively recruit and hire a diverse staff throughout their organizations.

12. Seek no favor; believe that personal aggrandizement or profit secured by confidential information or by misuse of public time is dishonest.

Guidelines

- *Gifts.* Members should not directly or indirectly solicit any gift or accept or receive any gift—whether it be money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, promise, or any other form—under the following circumstances: (1) it could be reasonably inferred or expected that the gift was intended to influence them in the performance of their official duties; or (2) the gift was intended to serve as a reward for any official action on their part.

It is important that the prohibition of unsolicited gifts be limited to circumstances related to improper influence. In de minimus situations, such as meal checks, some modest maximum dollar value should be determined by the member as a guideline. The guideline is not intended to isolate members from normal social practices where gifts among friends, associates, and relatives are appropriate for certain occasions.

- *Investments in Conflict with Official Duties.* Member should not invest or hold any investment, directly or indirectly, in any financial business, commercial, or other private transaction that creates a conflict with their official duties.

  In the case of real estate, the potential use of confidential information and knowledge to further a member's personal interest requires special consideration. This guideline recognizes that members' official actions and decisions can be influenced if there is a conflict with personal investments. Purchases and sales which might be interpreted as speculation for quick profit ought to be avoided (see the guideline on "Confidential Information").

  Because personal investments may prejudice or may appear to influence official actions and decisions, members may, in concert with their governing body, provide for disclosure of such investments prior to accepting their position as local government administrator or prior to any official action by the governing body that may affect such investments.

- *Personal Relationships.* Member should disclose any personal relationship to the governing body in any instance where there could be the appearance of a conflict of interest. For example, if the manager's spouse works for a developer doing business with the local government, that fact should be disclosed.

- *Confidential Information.* Members should not disclose to others, or use to further their personal interest, confidential information acquired by them in the course of their official duties.

- *Private Employment.* Members should not engage in, solicit, negotiate for, or promise to accept private employment, nor should they render services for private interests or conduct a private business when such employment, service, or business creates a conflict with or

impairs the proper discharge of their official duties.

Teaching, lecturing, writing, or consulting are typical activities that may not involve conflict of interest, or impair the proper discharge of their official duties. Prior notification of the appointing authority is appropriate in all cases of outside employment.

- *Representation.* Members should not represent any outside interest before any agency, whether public or private, except with the authorization of or at the direction of the appointing authority they serve.

- *Endorsements.* Members should not endorse commercial products or services by agreeing to use their photograph, endorsement, or quotation in paid or other commercial advertisements, whether or not for compensation. Members may, however, agree to endorse the following, provided they do not receive any compensation: (1) books or other publications; (2) professional development or educational services provided by nonprofit membership organizations or recognized educational institutions; (3) products and/or services in which the local government has a direct economic interest.

Members' observations, opinions, and analyses of commercial products used or tested by their local governments are appropriate and useful to the profession when included as part of professional articles and reports.

For comments, questions or feedback on this resource, please contact **careers@icma.org**. This document can also be found online at **icma.org/breakingintolg**.