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THE CAREER OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGER

I look upon my profession as city manager in exactly the same way that a minister of the gospel looks upon his mission and believe that as a city manager endeavoring to make the city for those administrative affairs I am responsible better in every way for every man and woman.

—Louis Brownlow (1922, p. 151)

Although the profession of the local government manager only recently reached the age of 100, it has a rich and storied history. The profession is one that has evolved over time, yet the roles managers play in their communities have remained mostly consistent. Today, the majority of local governments, both municipal and county, have chief executive officers who are professional managers. As the complexity of communities increases and the problems those communities face become more “wicked,” the value of professional management is increasingly clear.

In this environment of challenging issues facing local governments and increasingly complex relationships with states—when professional managers will be needed most—there is evidence that the pipeline of educated and experienced future managers will not be sufficient. A wave of manager retirements and a narrow pipeline of graduate students pursuing training in local government management could lead to difficulty finding qualified people to run local governments. However, the career of the local government manager can be immensely rewarding. This chapter describes the local government management career and the people who have chosen to spend their professional lives running the communities Americans call home.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGER PROFILES

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Twenty-five years ago, I transitioned from a job in state government to my first position in local government and have never looked back! I have been a career assistant city manager and love my role as the “chief operating officer” of the city. In this role, I have managed all aspects of the day-to-day operations in public works, police, fire, planning, airport, library, finance, IT [information technology], parks and recreation. I am so proud of the work I have done with six really unique cities across the nation. I can’t think of a better way to have fulfilled my desire to use my MPA [master of public administration] to make life better for people through service to my community.

Education

At the time of the birth of the profession of local government management, the United States was in the midst of the Industrial Revolution. While substantial changes occurred in private industry during this time, it also marked a period of rapid population growth in urban centers. In response, towns and cities faced the daunting task of creating and sustaining a system of infrastructure—water and sewer systems, roads, and public safety—to support that population growth. As adoption of the council–manager form spread throughout the nation, elected boards chose managers who they believed could best address this challenge.

It is for this reason that so many early city and town managers were trained in engineering (Stone, Price, & Stone, 1940). Generally, managers were tasked with overseeing large public works projects. “City after city adopted the plan because it was thought a manager would more quickly build paved streets, sidewalks, sewers, and other public works” (p. 56). Early managers were not required to have college diplomas, and many communities sought people with experience directing public works projects rather than a specific educational background.

Although today the most popular degree for local government managers is public administration, until after World War II, it was uncommon for managers to have a

graduate degree in public administration (and such programs were scarce). Table 5.1 shows the level of education of local government managers from 1935 to 2000. In the 1930s, very few managers had advanced degrees. By 2000, more than 60% held graduate degrees. The reverse is true of managers holding high school diplomas or less. In the 1930s, close to 40% had no education beyond high school. As municipal and county governments grew in size and complexity—adding more services to satisfy more people—greater capacity in leading and expertise in managing a large organization became necessary.

TABLE 5.1 ■ Education Level of Local Government Managers, 1935–2000

	1935	1964	1974	1984	2000
High School or Less	39%	14%	6%	2%	2%
Some College, No Degree	24%	22%	18%	10%	9%
Bachelor Degree	35%	41%	38%	30%	26%
Graduate Degree	2%	23%	38%	58%	63%
Number Reporting	449	1,582	1,646	2,348	3,175

Sources: City Management Intl., 1996; ICMA, 1984, 2001; Nolting, Arnold, & Powers, 1965; Ridley & Nolting, 1940.

Adoption of the council–manager form increased considerably after World War II (Nelson & Svava, 2014a), partly in response to the increasing complexity in local governance. Also in this period, the degree focus shifted away from engineering and toward the social sciences.

Age

The average age of the local government manager is increasing (see Table 5.2). While the percentage of managers over 60 had remained below 10% since the 1970s, in 2012, it ballooned to over 20%. Two thirds of managers are now 50 and over. These figures are not surprising, as they represent the baby boom generation. However, the low percentage of managers in the 40-and-under category indicates that the pipeline to replace retiring managers may not be sufficient.

In 2013, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) conducted a survey of its members to gather data on retirement and succession planning. All members currently in service received the survey (3,742) and 1,080 members

responded for a response rate of 35%. The retirement numbers are sobering. More than 60% of respondents have been working in local government for 20 years or more. This figure is consistent with the age data found in the 2012 State of the Profession survey that is summarized in the Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2 ■ Age of Local Government Managers, 1974–2012

	1974	1984	2000	2012
40 & under	42%	49%	18%	11%
41–50	31%	26%	40%	26%
51–60	22%	20%	37%	40%
Over 60	6%	5%	5%	23%

Sources: ICMA, 1975, 1985, 2001, 2013.

The pending wave of retirements at the local government chief administrative officer (CAO) level coupled with reports that enrollments of master of public administration (MPA) students interested in local government are down means that there will likely be a significant gap between the number of open CAO positions and people available to fill them. Some local governments have begun investing in developing a future cadre of senior managers. However, succession planning is rare. Fewer than 2% of the respondents to the 2013 ICMA retirement survey reported that they had a succession-planning program. Nearly 45% reported that they have no programs in place to recruit or retain future senior managers.

Gender and Racial Diversity

Concerning diversity, municipal and county managers are not representative of the U.S. population. People of color and women continue to be starkly underrepresented in the profession. According to the ICMA 2012 State of the Profession survey (ICMA, 2013), more than 90% of local government CAOs are white and close to 85% are men.

Women now make up approximately 15% of CAOs in U.S. municipalities and counties (Nelson & Svava, 2014b), but that ratio has changed very little in the past 40 years, and it is far from reflective of the U.S. population. Today, women manage some of the largest council–manager communities in the nation (i.e., Las Vegas, Nevada; San Antonio, Texas; Mecklenburg County, North Carolina). However,

these are limited exceptions to the general rule that most municipal and county managers are men and that approximately 50% female managers serve in jurisdictions under 10,000 in population, compared to 40% of men (Nelson & Svava, 2014b).

In 2012, the ICMA formed a task force on women in the profession. Upon completion of their work, the task force made a set of recommendations to the ICMA executive board to aid in the promotion of women in the profession. These recommendations ranged from improving the data and research to explain issues of gender inequality in the profession to partnering with state associations and municipal leagues on recruitment initiatives. Unfortunately, research is limited that investigates why female local government CAOs remain in low proportion to male CAOs. However, there is speculation that elected boards may be discriminating and that women are choosing to stay in the assistant manager position to ensure greater stability for their families. The position of assistant manager is less likely to be subject to some of the politics experienced in the CAO position, which makes a longer tenure more certain than as a manager. To some degree, efforts to promote local government management to women are conducted without full information about the roots of the problem.

Racially, the profession is also not representative of the population. According to the 2012 ICMA State of the Profession survey (ICMA, 2013), more than 90% of local government CAOs are white. Given that many professionally run communities are majority–minority and that minority managers should be accepted in all communities, this discrepancy is problematic when seeking *bureaucratic representativeness*. A bureaucracy is representative when its members are demographically similar to the citizens they serve, particularly in race and gender. According to the theory of representative bureaucracy, administrators who have characteristics in common with the population being served are better able to understand and meet the interests of the public.

WORKING AS A LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGER

The recruitment and selection process for managers is different from other local government positions. Local government governing boards usually select and hire the manager as a body. The mayor's role may be more significant than that of other members of the board; this additional authority will be outlined in the charter. In medium and large communities, search firms are often hired to handle the recruitment process, but many smaller communities use in-house resources.

PETER AUSTIN

COUNTY MANAGER, MCHENRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS

As I was nearing completion [of] my undergraduate degree [at the University of Iowa], I attended a graduate school fair and was introduced to the MPA degree [at Northern Illinois University] and the profession of local government management. I immediately had a clear career path and I have never looked back. For me, the opportunity to serve the public in a professional, respected, dynamic environment was exactly what I was looking for and it remains both challenging and rewarding today.

Job Requirements for a Local Government Manager

In most cases, local elected boards have the authority to select the municipal or county manager with few restrictions. Advertisements for positions as local government managers usually specify at least three categories of requirements: education, experience, and residency. Local ordinances or charters may mandate a minimum level of experience and/or education and will speak to whether or not residency within the community is a requirement. Local governing boards may choose to exceed the education or experience minimums when advertising for the positions.

As discussed earlier, the majority of current managers have graduate degrees. Although a bachelor's degree is often listed in the local government code as a minimum requirement, job announcements for city and county managers increasingly seek a master's degree. The degree field is rarely limited to public administration.

Local government charters and ordinances (and in some cases, state statutes) provide limited guidance about the minimum qualifications for the position of city or county manager. The language used in Rio Rancho, New Mexico's home rule charter is fairly standard:

The city manager shall be appointed solely on the basis of executive and administrative qualifications. The city manager need not be a resident of the City or State at the time of appointment, but may reside outside the City while in office only with the express prior approval of the Governing Body. (Rio Rancho, 2016, Charter Article III, Section 3.04)

Some charters are more specific about the education requirements of the prospective manager, such as this excerpt from Cedar Rapids, Iowa:

The city manager shall be appointed solely on the basis of his or her education, experience, and fitness of the person to serve in that capacity without regard to political or other affiliation. The manager need not be a resident of the city or state at the time of appointment but shall reside within Cedar Rapids unless residence outside of the city is approved by the council. (Cedar Rapids, 2016, Article IV, Section 4.01)

Bixby, Oklahoma, mandates a minimum education of bachelor's degree but also stipulates that the university must be accredited.

County codes referencing the minimum qualifications of the county manager are similar to those of municipal governments. Sullivan County, New York, requires candidates to have a master's degree in public administration (or a similar degree) and five years of government employment. Lyon County, Nevada's code provides considerable detail on minimum qualifications:

Be chosen upon the basis of knowledge and skills in public administration, demonstrated administrative ability and knowledge of public budgeting, personnel, finance and organization. This requirement may normally be met by a combination of education and experience equal to a bachelor's degree in business or public administration and at least five (5) years of administrative experience, preferably in government or public administration and involved management responsibilities. (2016, Title 1, Chapter 7, 1.07.03)

Given the somewhat general language used in the local laws, governing boards have considerable discretion in selecting their top candidate for the job. Therefore, experience may come from a variety of sources, not solely from previous local government work. And the degree field may be less important than the degree itself. Recent research suggests that boards make a distinction between graduate education in public administration and other advanced degrees. "We find that an advanced degree in public administration is valued more than other educational backgrounds by city councils, and this value is independent of social and economic characteristics of cities and traits of individual managers" (Vanderleeuw, Sides, & Williams, 2015, p. 453). However, the narrower pipeline of traditional candidates for local government has led to a diversification of the career paths of city and county managers.

Career Paths and Patterns

Local government managers attain CAO positions through several potential career paths. More than 60% of respondents to the 2013 ICMA retirement survey

have worked their entire careers in local government. Although there is limited data to provide percentages, the most common career path for a professional local government manager is through the attainment of a MPA degree and progressively greater experience. This is demonstrated in the 2013 ICMA retirement and succession planning survey, in which more than 56% of respondents reported that their first exposure to local government was through an internship or fellowship during or immediately following their MPA studies. Some new MPA graduates proceed immediately into the management of a small town (2.4% in the ICMA survey). However, the majority of graduating students attain junior management positions in a local government, working their way up both in progressively larger communities and jobs with greater responsibility and authority. Common entry-level jobs for new MPA graduates seeking to become local government managers include management analysts, financial analysts, management fellows, and assistant to the city/county manager. Later, they will progress into jobs as assistant department heads or managers. Ultimately, if they choose to take that path, they are more likely to become CAOs of a municipality or county.

As the number of retiring managers has increased, local elected bodies may consider hiring managers from less-traditional paths. It is becoming more common to see managers who once worked in the private sector, including nonprofits, or who have a military background. Although the appeal of the nontraditional candidate may be evident to elected officials, these potential new managers typically have no training in public budgeting and finance, personnel, or the dynamics of the local government system. They will also have a limited understanding of how local governments work or how local governments fit into the broader system of government.

Former police and fire chiefs are also being hired as managers; this used to be an atypical progression. Department heads who are more likely to become managers are finance, public works, and economic or community development. Hiring managers with a background in public safety may be an indication of the community's concern over crime or other public safety issues.

What happens to local government managers after they take a CAO position in a municipal or county government? Watson and Hassett (2004) identify one of four career paths once a manager reaches the CAO position. A small percentage of managers essentially remain in one community as the manager for most of their career. These are long-serving managers who have found their niche in a stable community. Lateral movers make up another group, moving from place to place but staying in smaller-sized jurisdictions. Watson and Hassett suggest that these managers are often fired or forced to resign due to political issues. Another group of managers have worked their way up through the same organization. They hold a number of

jobs within a single government, moving into positions with increasingly higher levels of authority. Finally, the fourth group of managers moves up by taking positions in communities with progressively larger populations.

Job Satisfaction and Turnover

Concerns about job stability are a perennial question among managers and those interested in becoming managers. Local government CAOs work at the will of their elected bodies and/or mayors and may have little or no warning before being dismissed or encouraged to resign. Some communities place a moratorium on management changes in the first few months following an election, but this is uncommon. When council members run on an agenda for change, change in the manager may be the primary goal.

A number of studies have been conducted to explore the tenure of the local government manager. Data shows that the average tenure of a city manager is short, less than seven years (Renner, 2001). However, this is an increase from the average stay of 3.5 years in 1965 (Watson & Watson, 2006). Most of the research has been confined to municipal governments. Generally, the factors that affect whether a manager stays or goes can be divided into two categories—those that push the manager out and those that pull the manager to another jurisdiction. Those factors that push a manager out are generally political in nature, while the pull factors deal with career advancement. Research indicates that both categories of factors are influential in manager turnover (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990).

At the local level, the political environment is frequently fraught with conflict and potential instability. Political conflict may result from disagreements among council members, making it difficult for the manager to determine consensus. Therefore, the manager may be seen as taking sides. Research shows that political conflict and uncertainty are related to managers' turnover (McCabe, Feiock, Clingermayer, & Stream, 2008; Tekniepe & Stream, 2012; see Photo 5.1). Managers may be asked to resign under these circumstances or may decide to seek a job with a more supportive political environment. Conversely, cities with greater stability among the elected officials have lower probability of manager turnover (Renner & DeSantis, 1994).

Issues in the community may reach a level that also creates an inhospitable environment for the manager. Generally, research has identified community conflict as a contributor to manager turnover (Feiock & Stream, 1998). Other issues that may impact turnover include fiscal stress (Tekniepe & Stream, 2012) that may be blamed on the manager, public safety problems, or economic development strains.



Local government managers can be dismissed without cause.

Not only can community turmoil over an issue affect the tenure of a given manager, it can have implications for the success of the form of government more generally. In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled in *Kelo vs. City of New London, CT*, that economic development is a legitimate public purpose and therefore, private property can be seized and redeveloped for economic development. This decision was very unpopular in the city of New London, particularly because the primary developer backed out of the project, leaving vacant property where private homes had once stood. In 2007, voters elected through referendum to modify New London's charter, changing from the council–manager form to the mayor–council form.

Pull factors relate to managers' competitiveness for other jobs and their openness to seeking other positions. There is some evidence that higher levels of education both make it more likely that a manager will seek employment advancement elsewhere (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990) and that higher education provides some safeguard against being asked to leave (Feiock & Stream, 1998; Tekniepe & Stream, 2012). As the field has grown more professionalized, there is some evidence to suggest that careerism leads to managers holding more positions than in the past (Nalbandian, 1991; Renner, 1990).

Other factors that have been found to have an association with manager turnover cannot be classified as push or pull. For example, research in large counties found

that managers who were hired from within had a longer tenure than those hired externally (Tekniepe & Stream, 2012). Some managers report that they seek positions with greater stability for their family's sake (Hassett & Watson, 2002).

Generally, managers' decisions to stay in a community or go elsewhere depend on whether the managers are experiencing satisfaction with the job. Research has shown that external motivators such as salary level do matter to managers but so do intrinsic motivators (Zhang, Yao, & Cheong, 2011). In surveys, managers report having greater satisfaction when they have policy-making influence, a positive relationship with members of council, and a belief in the effectiveness of council (DeSantis, Glass, & Newell, 1992; Zhang et al., 2011).

ROLES OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGER

MICHAEL BAKER

ASSISTANT MANAGER, DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS

I have found a career in local government management to be rewarding in many ways. It's professionally challenging, deeply connects me to my local community and offers tremendous opportunities for growth and development. As a Deputy Manager, I am able to take on substantial responsibilities that help to leave a legacy of strong professional management in the community.

Local government managers differ in how they spend their working time. These differences are the result of a number of factors, including the size of the community, the engagement level of the elected body, the size of the staff, the culture of the organization, and the leadership style of the manager and mayor.

Policy versus Administration

Perhaps the key consideration a manager needs to make is how much time to devote to the policy process versus administrative tasks. The question of how to strike the correct balance between politics and administration has been an ongoing one since the inception of the profession. (See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the politics-administration dichotomy from the elected official perspective.)

A key debate in the field has concerned whether or not there should or could be a dichotomy between politics and administration. A dichotomy would mean that the manager does not engage in any political or policy activity and elected officials do not intervene in administrative duties. Conceptually, this would mean the manager is able to remain neutral, relying on his or her professional expertise, and does not provide opinions or have an active role in the policy process.

While this concept may have sounded good in the abstract—meaning managers stay out of policy decisions—it is not consistent with the theory of the council–manager plan nor is it realistic in practice. Research of documents related to this question dating back to the early 1900s show that the endorsers of the council–manager plan in the National Municipal League and early local government managers realized that the manager has a critically important role in the policy process (Nelson & Svara, 2014a).

The influential work of James Svara on the relationship between policy and administration in local government suggests that the relationship between elected officials and managers is a complementary one (Svara, 2002). According to Svara, “The complementarity of politics and administration is based on the premise that elected officials and administrators join together in a common pursuit of sound governance” (p. 179). Their responsibilities and roles overlap at times, but ideally, they will work in partnership toward a better government.

Svara argues that the relationship between politics and administration in local government has always been one of complementarity. Although a number of scholars assert that there once existed a dichotomy in the council–manager profession, research on the early papers of the profession show that was not the case (Nelson & Svara, 2014a). There is evidence that the manager has always served an advisory role to the council in the policy process. In addition, the manager has always played a role in the broader community. Moreover, Nelson and Svara did find evidence that the community role has grown from being directed to information sharing and actively seeking citizen engagement.

Role Differences between Local Government Managers and Chief Administrative Officers

Professional management of local governments is not confined to the council–manager form. Municipalities and counties using the mayor–council, commission, and town meeting forms of government often have the option to add a CAO to the organization. The level of authority and independence granted the CAO can vary vastly from one community to the next.

A mayor–council government can have a strong mayor with a CAO. In that case, the mayor would be the person who appoints and directs the work of the CAO. There are, however, two other ways to appoint the CAO that provide greater potential interaction with the city council. In some mayor–council cities, the council must approve the appointment of the CAO, and in others, the mayor and council jointly make the appointment. In some communities, the appointed CAO has power and authority that is equivalent to that of a manager under the council–manager form. In states such as Wisconsin and Illinois, municipalities can use ordinances to approximate the council–manager form while switching to the statutory council–manager form, which requires a referendum. Therefore, it is much easier to institute a mayor–council with CAO form and delegate similar powers to the CAO that would normally be assigned to the manager than it is to have an official council–manager form of government. However, because statute or charter does not protect the powers and position of the manager, the council can alter the position through a simple ordinance, providing the CAO with less stability and certainty about the position.

When considering whether a job as a CAO in the mayor–council form is equivalent to the top job in a council–manager community, a prospective candidate should consider both the list of duties assigned to the CAO and how those duties are assigned. If the assignments are determined by the mayor, the CAO is, in effect, an extension of the mayor’s office. If the duties and authority are delineated in ordinances, they are more definitive, although they can be modified by the council as a whole through the normal council procedure for instituting ordinances. In contrast, if the duties are specified in either charter or state law, the method for modifying those duties is a more complex procedure that will take much longer to take effect. Even if the ordinances contain a provision that states that the changes will not apply to the sitting CAO, a significant reduction in the authority through ordinances sends a disappointing message to the administrator.

David Ammons (2008) conducted a study to determine how roles of CAOs and managers differ by surveying people who have held both types of positions. One question asked them to estimate the percentage of time they spent engaged in management, policy, and political activities as both managers and CAOs. While they rated the amount of time spent on management time as roughly equivalent in the two positions, they rated the CAO job as spending more time on political activities while rating the manager as spending more time on policy activities.

Respondents were also asked to evaluate which characteristics were more closely associated with the council–manager than the city administrator positions. The majority (81%) of respondents rated the managers as having more authority to direct the management team; 75% said that the manager had greater responsibility, too.

However, when asked which position had more influence on budgetary matters, only 47% identified the manager as having greater influence. The majority (52%) said that it was about equal. Ammons states that conclusions that the CAO brings the same level of professionalism to mayor–council governments that managers bring to theirs are overstated.

In a survey of managers and CAOs in 1997, Svava (1999) found similar results. City managers rated their influence in decisions about the budget and economic development higher than did the CAOs. In the mayor–council cities, the method of appointing the CAO made a difference. Those appointed by the council perceived their influence to be greater than those appointed by the mayor. Differences in the structure of the two systems and variations in the mayor–council form led to differences in how power, authority, and role expectations were perceived.

The profession of the local government manager is an exciting one. Managers rarely remain in the same community throughout their careers. While this can be unsettling to some, especially those moves that result due to firing or forced resignations, it can also provide a sense of excitement and new challenges to the managers. Given the opening up of the field due to pending retirements, the next generation of managers will have new opportunities not seen for a generation.

Managers are tasked with counseling elected officials regarding the identification of issues and alternative policy options and with the day-to-day running of a local government as well as shaping its planning for the future. To carry out these tasks, they must also be leaders who are able to create a bridge between the policy directives of elected officials, the needs and aspirations of their communities, and the skills and abilities of their staff.

MANAGERS AS LEADERS

Leadership of a public organization is necessarily more complex than that of a private organization, and perhaps no public sector leadership environment is as complex as that of the local government manager. Public sector organizational leaders must contend with multiple competing interests, an environment that is infused with politics, and a level of transparency to both the media and the citizens that is unmatched in the private sector or at other levels of government. At the local level, all of these factors are heightened further by the smaller size of the organization and constituency being served, bringing the managers and elected officials in closer proximity to the people they serve. Services provided by local governments have the greatest impacts on the day-to-day lives of citizens.

KIMIKO GILMORE**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI**

My career in local government was not a path that I chose, it chose me. After receiving my MPA, I was working for a presidential campaign and after it concluded, a new councilman asked me to work with him. That was when I fell in love with local government. Crafting legislation at the local level was truly a civic engagement activity. Citizen input emanating from town halls, kitchen table talks, calls, letters and e-mails were all used to ensure that the constituents received what they needed. I began to understand the almost immediate impact that local government action has on communities.

Years later, after a successful run in nonprofit management and a period working for a U.S. Senator, an opportunity at the city to work for the city manager came my way. Without hesitation, I applied for the position and was fortunate to be offered the job. Since that time, my appreciation for local government has grown. Working for a city, county, town, or village is a tremendous responsibility. Every aspect of what makes communities work is implemented by local government officials who have expertise in many areas. Engineering, social work, law, science of all types, finance, architecture—most professions have a place in local government.

The level of professionalism that is demonstrated daily by these individuals may go unnoticed, which is a very good thing. It's when a crisis occurs and is not managed in a reasonable amount of time that one understands the value of local government leadership. When it's done right, when management invests in the professional development of their team in order that they can offer the highest level of service to residents, the result is a community where people want live, work and grow.

Local government managers have two primary leadership roles: leader of the local government organization and community leader. The role of the manager as the chief administrator, the person who controls day-to-day operations and short- and long-term planning, is the one that is probably foremost in most people's minds when they think of the job of a local government manager. However, the increasingly complex interorganizational and intergovernmental environments that exist in the modern metropolis have led to the community leadership role taking on additional importance.

The choice to add a professional manager to a local government is one that brings benefits to both the organization and the community. Most managers have training and education that allows them to improve both the governance of the organization and the relationships with citizens and other stakeholders. The ICMA's Task Force

on Professionalism developed an inventory of the ways that managers add value to their communities and to their organizations (Keene, Nalbandian, O'Neill, Portillo, & Svava, 2007).

One of the key values they discuss is the input managers provide during the public policy process, which results in more quality policies and positive results for their communities. Unlike elected officials, local government managers' tenure typically runs longer than the electoral term and is not representing a single district, so this provides the local government with someone in leadership with a long-term, community-wide perspective. Through their training, managers are taught how to evaluate performance and promote innovation as well as to produce greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The local government management profession is also grounded in a code of ethics that will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Managers are committed to personally adhering to ethical standards and promoting ethical behavior in their organizations. More broadly, the values that local government managers support lead them to engage in community building and promotion of the democratic process. Likewise, professional managers take measures to implement equitable processes within their organizations and to seek fair outcomes through the provision of local government services.

Management versus Leadership: What's the Difference?

Some assume that leadership and management go hand-in-hand. But, in fact, a person can be a manager without being a leader. Leadership is not automatically assigned through position in the organization. Instead, leadership comes from leaders interacting with their followers.

There exist many definitions of leadership. As Stodgill pointed out in 1974, "There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (p. 7). While most people believe they know leadership when they see it, defining it is difficult, given the many dimensions of leadership. A selection of definitions includes the following:

- "A process of motivating people to work together collaboratively to accomplish great things" (Vroom & Jago, 2007, p. 18).
- "A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2016, p. 7).

- “Leadership involves a relationship between people in which influence and power are unevenly distributed on a legitimate basis” and “in order for there to be a leader, there must be a follower” (Ott, Parkes, & Simpson, 2008, p. 33).

Distilling the overlapping elements of the three definitions above leads to the conclusion that leadership is a process that involves the interaction of individuals—the leader and the follower(s)—toward the pursuit of goals.

However, these definitions do nothing to distinguish between the concepts of *leadership* and *management*. One key difference between the two is that managers achieve their status through their position in an organization. A leader can emerge from anywhere in an organization’s hierarchy. So, in addition to the fact that a person can be a manager but not a leader, a person can also be a leader without being a manager.

One of the earliest attempts in public administration to describe the functions of a manager was the seminal work by Gulick and Urwick, *Papers on the Science of Administration* (1937). A good manager must handle the daily tasks of running an organization and must do so efficiently. As discussed in Chapter 10, Gulick and Urwick developed the acronym POSDCORB to succinctly describe the functions of the manager.

These functions, when done well, allow a large organization to be run effectively on a day-to-day basis. However, these tasks do not constitute leadership. Although the manager must select staff and direct them, a leader does more than simply direct people.

Just as leadership theorists have struggled to develop a single definition of leadership, so has the question of distinguishing between leadership and management been a perennial one. Bennis (2009) created a list of 12 differences between leaders and managers. Bennis argues that leaders are more innovative, forward thinking, and independent than managers. While not universally flattering, and perhaps a negation of management’s importance that goes too far, Bennis’s list does point out that management tends to be defined more by daily tasks, while leadership, especially transformational leadership, means acting as a visionary.

Table 5.3 summarizes the distinctions between leadership and management from some of the most well-known leadership experts. The legitimacy of the manager comes from his or her position in the organization, whereas leaders use their skills in inspiring people to gain their cooperation, regardless of their formal level of authority. In the case of local government managers, it is essential that the CAO be both a skilled leader and a skilled manager to optimally run the organization.

TABLE 5.3 ■ Leadership versus Management

Leadership	Management	Source
Do things right	Do the right thing	Bennis, 2009
Getting people to want to do what needs to be done	Getting people to do what needs to be done	Bennis, 1994
Innovate	Administer	Carter-Scott, 1994
Effectiveness	Efficiency	Covey, 2004
Long-term thinking	Short-term thinking	Gardner, 1990
Coping with change	Coping with complexity	Kotter, 1999
Guide to new and unexplored territory	Handle things; maintain order, organization, and control	Kouzes & Posner, 2012
Architect	Builder	Mariotti, 1998
Persuading	Commanding	Weathersby, 1999

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGER AS ORGANIZATIONAL LEADER

The management tasks of the local government CAO are key to achieving a high-functioning organization. Good management makes organizational leadership easier to achieve. A key aspect of leading a local government is being able to facilitate the political-administrative relationship (Whitaker & Jenne, 1995). Managers

BILL HORNE

CITY MANAGER, CLEARWATER, FLORIDA

I was drawn to the city manager profession out of my sense of call to public service. I retired from the United States Air Force with 27 years of wonderful service and had the privilege of performing an assignment very similar to what a city manager does outside of Tokyo, Japan. This experience confirmed what I wanted to [do] post retirement and [I] was very fortunate to be in the right place at the right time in local government [in Clearwater]. I have been able to use all of my accumulated leadership and management experience to serve a local community and its leaders that want be the best it can be.

connect the elected board to the departments of the local government. Accepting that politics at the local level is unavoidable for the manager leads to the understanding that the manager will play a key role in enabling the relationship between staff and elected officials.

Elected officials must trust that the manager and the staff are professional experts. However, managers and staff should also have an understanding that they take direction from the elected officials. Managers must have good relationships with elected officials for the government to operate efficiently and effectively.

Unique Challenges to Leading in Local Government

Local government organizations possess unique management and leadership challenges not found in the private sector. Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great* (2001), wrote a monograph for the social sectors that explains that public organizations should not seek to run themselves as businesses. Not all businesses are great, but all organizations should seek to be great.

When public sector organizations seek greatness, the traits that set them apart from private organizations can present challenges. For example, Collins describes how power is diffused in public sector organizations. In local governments, the CAO does not have unilateral authority. The CAO takes policy direction from the elected officials. The elected officials themselves share authority, so consensus is not always possible. This leaves the managers in situations without clear direction. Choosing one policy alternative over another can be interpreted as the manager taking sides. Because power is so diffuse, Collins argues that public sector leaders must draw on legislative leadership. Since no one person has sufficient power to make significant unilateral decisions, legislative leadership draws on the powers of “persuasion, political currency, and shared interests” (Collins, 2001, p. 11).

Another issue that is particular to government is that hiring and firing of staff is constrained by the civil service system. Rules that were put in place to encourage merit hiring today may limit the choices of managers when dealing with issues with staff. Collins argues that it is just as important to be able to “get the wrong people off the bus” as it is to get the “right people on the bus.” In government, civil service protections and due process regulations can make it difficult to dismiss employees who do not perform well. City and county managers typically have considerable discretion when making hiring and firing decisions. However, rules and regulations vary by state and jurisdiction, so there may be more or less autonomy regarding staffing, depending on the state and the organization.

The differences between public and private organizations highlighted by Collins leads to the conclusion that local government managers have to be creative in the

ways they lead and motivate within their organizations. Most studies on how leadership quality affects organizational performance deal with private industry alone. However, research in local governments has found that those managers who are perceived as high-quality leaders are able to create organizations that are more innovative (Gabris, Golembiewski, & Ihrke, 2000; Gabris & Nelson, 2013). High-quality local government leadership is also associated with local governing boards that experience less dysfunctional conflict (Nelson & Nollenberger, 2011). Other studies have found high-quality leadership in local government to be associated with the use of performance measures (Moynihan, Pandey, & Wright, 2012)—an example of management supporting leadership.

Manager Fit with the Community

Another part of the equation that may determine the success of managers as organizational leaders is whether the fit between the manager and the community is a good one. Unlike private sector jobs, in local government management, the person hired as CAO must not only be compatible with the organization itself but with the elected board and with the community. If a manager's personality does not fit with existing expectations of the elected officials or with the culture of the organization, it will likely mean a short tenure for the manager.

One study that examined manager fit found that although the literature in city and county management promotes the idea of the manager as a transformational leader—visionary, mission driven, and high achieving—it is the manager who is perceptive, inwardly driven, and not high achieving who has the longest tenure (Hanbury, Sapat, & Washington, 2004). Their research provides evidence that managers keep their jobs longer if they keep their heads down. The research fails to consider, however, that managers who are active in pursuing goals and innovation in one jurisdiction may be likely to pursue a vacancy in another jurisdiction that offers new opportunities, challenges, and rewards. Consequently, these managers will have a shorter tenure because they choose to move. Furthermore, it is likely that a transformational manager will be successful if that is what the elected officials expect of him or her.

A recent example of this disconnect occurred in Charlotte, North Carolina. In 2016, the city council chose not to renew the contract of Ron Carlee, city manager since 2013. Carlee was Charlotte's first outside hire for city manager since 1981, having previously worked as Arlington, Virginia's county manager and later for the ICMA. When hired, council members indicated they wanted an effective spokesperson for the city. The mayor was arrested for public corruption shortly after Carlee began working as manager, and Carlee spoke to the press about how the council–manager form

provided protection against bribery and other forms of corruption. Carlee also took a public role in the city's effort to prevent a state takeover of the airport and the city's defense in a potentially racially divisive police shooting. However, despite the encouragement of the council for Carlee to take a public role when they first hired him, according to news reports, some council members believed Carlee had become too outspoken (Harrison, 2016), and this was ultimately behind the pressure he received to resign. Carlee acted as a transformational leader, being out front on several key issues facing the city and making substantial changes to the organization, but it was controversy over this role that contributed to his short tenure.

Part of the problem with assessing manager fit to a community is determining the expectations of all involved. Even managers differ in what they consider the best leadership style (Fairholm, 2006). Some managers try to adhere to a very task-oriented, management-only style. At the other end of the spectrum, some managers believe in a whole-soul leadership style—leadership as a spiritual endeavor. Because people have different perspectives on what constitutes leadership, there may be conflict about whether or not a person is doing a good job. When this occurs, it is likely that the manager's tenure will be a short one.

When looking for a CAO position, prospective managers should seek to determine the culture of the community and the organization. They should also be familiar with the leadership style of their predecessor (if there was one) and determine whether that style was one that the elected officials were happy with. Candidates should be honest with themselves about their own leadership style and not believe that they can adapt to a setting that does not fit with their personality.

Other aspects of managing a municipality or county, particularly a smaller one, make fitting in with the community critical. Some managers describe their jobs as "leading in a fishbowl" (Morris et al., 2008). Managers live in the communities they serve. Their positions tend to be ones of greater visibility, compared to other jobs. For the manager, this means that he or she is often recognizable to a large number of residents—the manager is rarely completely off duty. They have to assume that people recognize them and behave accordingly. In addition, the job can affect the manager's family—whether it is a conflict of interest with a spouse's employment or the manager's children being confronted by schoolmates about something happening in town, the family is likely to be affected in some way.

Being a city or county manager is not easy. In addition to living in a fishbowl, the manager is always faced with multiple, competing interests (Beets, 2011). These competing interests lead to a set of leadership challenges. While managers are tasked with recommending good public policy, there are always political considerations to be made. The best policy option may be the least popular from the perspective of

citizens. Another challenge is that the manager must be both authoritative and a consensus builder. Dealing with various levels of staff, the manager must act with authority. But managers are also asked to build consensus with community members. Switching gears is not always easy to do.

Managers must also balance efficiency and equity concerns. While trying to provide services at the lowest cost and highest quality possible, managers must also ensure that the procedures and outcomes of the policy are fair. Efficiency and effectiveness are not sufficient to ensure fair treatment of individuals when implementing policies. If an individual or group is negatively and disproportionately affected or positively rewarded through a policy, the manager should seek to mitigate the inequity.

THE MANAGER'S CODE OF ETHICS

SCOTT LAZENBY

CITY MANAGER, LAKE OSWEGO, OREGON

The city manager's ability to make a real difference in a community can be deeply satisfying. As with other professions, a job well done is its own reward. But the city manager's close physical connection with the local community, and close personal connection with individuals in the community provide immediate and tangible evidence of the city manager's influence in a way that is reflected in few other professions.

The tremendous variety the city manager's job brings can also be exhilarating for individuals who thrive on change.

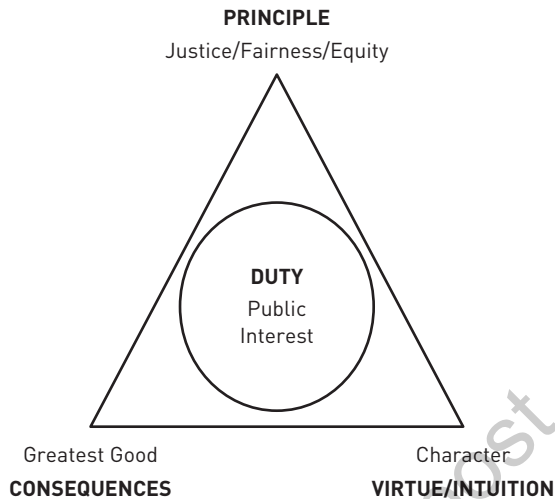
How to ensure accountability of public sector managers and staff in an environment of diffuse power and limited direct supervision has been an open question in public administration since the field was founded. Local government managers are not elected, so they cannot draw their authority directly from the voters. In the early 1940s, the debate between Carl J. Friedrich and Herman Finer set the stage for the basic question of public administrator accountability. Friedrich argued that traditional methods of accountability, primarily direct oversight, were unnecessary for public administrators because their professionalism, knowledge, and expertise serve as internal checks on accountability. Finer counterargued that despite greater professionalism, oversight by elected officials was still necessary to ensure that the democratic process would be intact (Jackson, 2009).

Dunn and Legge (2000) argue that the relationship is more complicated than either Friedrich or Finer would allow, that local government managers look to their profession when defining their responsibilities but to their elected officials when considering new policy options. This perspective is consistent with the council-manager form of government. Municipal and county managers rely a great deal on their professional training to handle oversight of government operations. However, when considering the suggestion of policy alternatives, they must also consider, to some degree, how the various options will fit with the goals of the elected body.

It is not possible for the elected officials to exercise daily direct oversight of the municipal or county manager. In addition to training and education, managers who are members of ICMA adhere to a strict professional code of ethics. The ICMA Code of Ethics (see Appendix 1) provides a set of 12 tenets with guidelines to aid managers when making decisions. The Code has been in place since 1924 and it has evolved over time as the profession has changed. Members of the organization sign a statement affirming their adherence to the Code. One of the most important aspects of the ICMA Code of Ethics is the enforcement provisions that back it up. When an ethics complaint is filed against a member, a peer review body called the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct reviews the complaint and determines whether or not sanctions are warranted. Sanctions vary from a private censure to a lifetime membership ban. In 2014, ICMA reviewed 19 ethics complaints against its members. Of the 19, five resulted in public censures, five resulted in private censures, and nine cases were closed. Common offenses that result in public censure include driving under the influence, misuse of public funds, political activities, and personal relationships with subordinates. Those resulting in private censure are usually related to employment searches and tenure, for example, staying on a job for less than two years (ICMA, 2014).

Some local government managers who choose not to join ICMA may instead join state managers' associations or the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA). ASPA recently amended their code of ethics and has also adopted enforcement provisions. Codes of ethics may be adopted at the local level as well. State chapters of ICMA often have their own codes of ethics with enforcement provisions. Increasingly, cities and counties are adopting their own codes of ethics for both elected officials and staff.

Ethical dilemmas—a case in which a decision may not be clear from a single ethical perspective—are common in government. James Svava (2007) argues that in these cases, public sector leaders rely on an “ethical triangle” to guide their decision (see Figure 5.1). The ethical triangle is built around four ethical philosophies: duty, principle, virtue, and consequences.

FIGURE 5.1 ■ Svara's Ethical Triangle

Source: Svara, 2007.

Duty is the responsibility a public sector employee or manager has to serve the public interest. Public servants are entrusted as stewards of the public interest. They are to put the public interest above their interests as individuals.

A decision that is ethical based on *principle* is one that is fair. It is considered just and equitable. Rules and laws are based on the principle basis of ethics. Certain actions are judged right or wrong by law.

The qualities that define whether a person is good or bad determine *virtue*. This form of ethics is based on the character and integrity of the individual. People have difficulty making choices that violate their own personal conceptions of right or wrong.

Finally, when making a decision, the manager may try to assess the *consequences* of the decision and seek to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Alone, each of these sources of ethics provides some guidance as to how to act, but in some cases, a problem or situation may not be clear-cut. When using multiple perspectives, the manager gains a fuller perspective of the various elements of right and wrong in the situation.

Svara (2007) uses hypothetical cases to illustrate examples using the ethics triangle. One of these cases describes a candidate for city manager who is asked by the council to agree to fire one of the department heads and is told that the other candidates have agreed to do the firing. There are beneficial consequences to that decision, primarily

that it gives the candidate a better chance at getting the job. The candidate may also believe that he or she is the most qualified for the job and so will be able to make positive changes in the organization and the community. However, these positive consequences are not sufficient to override concerns of duty and principle. As manager, it is his or her duty to make personnel decisions. In principle, the decision to fire the department head at council direction is not fair. Also, if the manager does fire the department head, he or she has established a precedent for encroachment from the council.

Having an established code of ethics does not make the tough choices of a local government manager easy. It does provide managers with guidance, however. Part of the excitement and challenge of a career in local government management is that the job is not the easiest. Every day presents a new opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the residents of communities throughout the country.

MAKING THE CASE FOR A CAREER IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT

SEAN STEGALL

TOWN MANAGER, CARY, NORTH CAROLINA

As town manager, I am in the unique position to serve the community with my colleagues while also serving as a coach to help them achieve their professional goals.

In an era where politics often trumps governance at “higher” levels of government, throughout my career, I have experienced the direct opposite at the local level. The vast majority of those council members I have worked for have been driven simply by making their community a better place. As a manager, I have the privilege of working with them to translate that collective goal into actual projects that make the world a better place, one community a time.

As the testimonials from managers and assistant managers included in this chapter demonstrate, people who choose a career in local government management do so for many different reasons. However, all managers value their role as public servants and their ability to contribute to a better quality of life for the residents of the communities they serve. Perhaps in no other public sector career are administrators able to have such a close and authentic connection to those served by their organization.

The job of a local government manager is not an easy one, but the challenges make it interesting, ever changing, and rewarding.

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Web Resources

- International City/County Management Association. Available at <http://www.icma.org>

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