

Wisconsin City/County Management Association

By Steve Volkert, City Administrator, Hartford

On WITI Channel 6 in Milwaukee, they start every 10 PM newscast with a familiar question: "It's 10 PM, do you know where your children are?" For younger individuals, this might seem strange, but for those with more "experience" we remember this being heard on every TV and Radio Station during times when curfews were first put into place.

The same could be said for all of us, "It's fall, do you know where your budget is?" For many if not most, that truly is a difficult question to answer. With reductions in some revenues, increases in many expenses, and levy limits which handcuff many of our budgets, this year's budget continues to be more and more difficult to check all the boxes.

In the past three months, I have been very fortunate to sit in on many regional meetings within WCMA, and the question on how people are addressing the pinch of budgets is a very common discussion. Some are talking about reductions in expenses through either cuts to benefits, cuts to staffing, or just reducing capital expenditures. But many others, with expenses and payroll as low as it can be, cutting just doesn't appear to be an option without reducing services. They are then forced to look at new/innovative revenues. This could be a new wheel tax, transportation tax, moving garbage from tax levy to monthly utility bills, balance billing for ambulance, creating a storm water utility, etc. The list goes on and on. Local Administrators/Managers have been forced to get extremely creative in doing the same thing, finding revenues to match growing expenditures and expectations.

This is why I love attending regional meetings in that I get to hear all the new ways that individual communities are raising revenues to offset the need for levy increases and get under levy limits and expenditure restraints. This concept of idea sharing is core to exactly why we join WCMA and ICMA. In this profession, like college, it's not about knowing it all, but knowing where to find it all, and WCMA is that place. By sharing your experiences and getting to know what everyone else is doing, we grow as Administrators and thus become more valuable to our communities.

One idea for new revenues which is starting to gain traction with state legislators is municipal sales tax. While not supported by everyone, there appears to be some legislators who are understanding the need that sales tax presents a way to generate income on the ground floor of government, the local municipalities. Currently only allowed at the state and county level, we are seeing how fund balances in those areas are swelling but not translating into new roads, better infrastructure, housing

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growth, or service level increases in key areas of fire, EMS and police.

As an organization, WCMA will continue to look at all new initiatives to help our municipalities balance their ever-challenging budgets through new revenue streams and expense reductions including the very popular Innovation Grants being offered currently. These topics will continue to be covered at our upcoming conferences and at Regional meetings.

Balancing budgets is a very key part of our jobs. So, if you ever need help with ideas or suggestions, please reach out to those in your Region and throughout the organization. As I said in our Summer Newsletter, asking for help is never a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength. When we all work together and help each other, we can reach our community goals while maintaining our own level of sanity.

WHO'S WHO DIRECTORY

Richard Downey is the new village administrator in the village of Deerfield. His new contact information is:
Richard Downey
Village Administrator
23 W. Nelson St., P.O. Box 66
Deerfield, WI 53531
Email: rdowney@deerfieldwi.com
Phone: 608-764-5404

Jessica Wolff is the new assistant city administrator in the city of Mequon. She previously served as the acting administrator in the village of Grafton.

Mark Steward has been appointed as the Village Administrator for the village of Dane. He was previously with Vierbicher.

James Hurley formerly Administrator-Treasurer for the Town of Linn, is now the Administrator for the Village/Town of Somers

Retirement!

Randy Terronez - County Administrator - Rock County Wisconsin

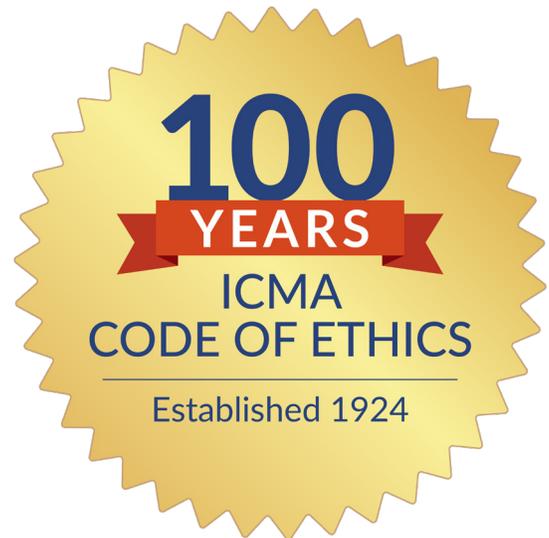
Effective October 10, 2025, I am entered into my next life phase - RETIREMENT! Thanks for the networking opportunities!

JOB MART

[Click here for current job openings](#)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Amanda Ardis, Village of Caledonia, Human Resources Manager
- Kent Ellis, State of Wisconsin, Program and Policy Analyst Advanced
- Julie Esch, Milwaukee County Transit System, Interim Managing Director
- Tracy Hennessey, Village of Pleasant Prairie, Human Resources Director
- Kyle Kordell, City of Two Rivers, City Manager
- Debra Michael, Village of Summit, Village Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer
- Candace Pesch, Marathon County, Deputy County Administrator
- Ryan VanDeWalle, Village of Rothschild, Village Administrator



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EVENTS

November 13
Region 4 Meeting
Tomah, WI

November 13
Region 2 Meeting
Rib Mountain, WI

November 20 - 21
WCMA Women's
Leadership Seminar
Green Lake, WI

December 3
WCMA Professional
Development
Virtual

December 10
Region 6 Meeting
Port Washington, WI

December 12
Region 1 Meeting
Location TBD

**View full
Calendar**

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MEET OUR 25-26 BOARD PRESIDENT

Steve Volkert

CITY ADMINISTRATOR - HARTFORD, WI



Steve is serving as the W... Drawing from his extensiv... government manager who tra... Wisconsin co...

MEET OUR 25-26 BOARD PRESIDENT-ELECT

Tyler Burkart

VILLAGE MANAGER - BROWN DEER, WI



MEET OUR 25-26 BOARD VICE PRESIDENT/TREASURER

Inga Cushman

ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR/HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER - COTTAGE GROVE, WI



Inga... Cottage Grove... career includes a 16... local community.

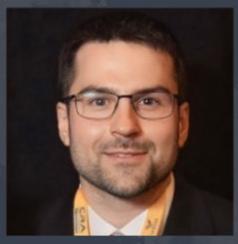
Check out our "Meet the Board" series on LinkedIn & Facebook



MEET OUR REGION 1 DIRECTOR

Roy Atkinson

ASSISTANT CITY ADMINISTRATOR - ALTOONA, WI



Roy is serving as the Region 1 Director through June 30, 2026. Roy Atkinson, the Assistant City Manager for Altoona, Wisconsin, holds an MPA from Central Michigan University and has eight years of municipal leadership experience, specializing in placemaking, parks, and communications.

WCMA

MEET OUR REGION 2 DIRECTOR

Scott Kluver

CITY ADMINISTRATOR - PARK FALLS, WI



Scott is serving as the Region 2 Director through June 30, 2028. Scott Kluver is an accomplished public administrator with a background in municipal government, an MPA from UW-M, and a passion for outdoor activities and music, currently serving as the City Administrator for Park Falls, Wisconsin.

WCMA

MEET OUR REGION 3 DIRECTOR

Josh Finch

CITY ADMINISTRATOR - WAUPACA, WI



Josh is serving as the Region 3 Director through June 30, 2028. Josh Finch is the City Administrator for Waupaca, Wisconsin, he is committed to collaborative leadership, sustainable growth, and community quality of life, and also enjoys family time, traveling, and community service.

WCMA

NEW WCMA ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – BUT NOT A NEW FACE

WCMA welcomes Rachel Gorsuch Sorensen as our new Assistant Director. This new role is the next step in our Executive Director Succession Plan, as Rachel will be working closely with current Executive Director Dawn Peters in anticipation of her fall 2026 retirement. We're excited to have her officially join the team as a Research Associate - Associations for the NIU Center for Governmental Studies, where she will serve as Assistant Director for both WCMA and ILCMA. We recently sat down with Rachel to get to know her better.

Q & A with Our New Assistant Director

Who are you?

My name is Rachel Gorsuch Sorensen, though I know that's a mouthful! Feel free to call me Rachel or Rachel Gorsuch.

I live in the booming metropolis of Hinckley, IL – population 2,006 – with my newly 5-year-old son Hudson. He'll pop up on Zoom meetings every now and again and loves to say hi, so definitely join a committee if you want to see his cute little face. Hudson has four older half-brothers who spend lots of time with us as well. They certainly keep me busy, and I love being a sports and music mom cheering on the sidelines and in the audience!

I grew up in Reedsburg, Wisconsin and my family still lives there. Public service has always been modeled for me. My mother practices law and has served as the City of Reedsburg Municipal Judge since the mid-2000s. My father recently retired from Sauk County where he was a Psychiatric Nurse for over 15 years. My younger brother lives in Madison and is a CNA. I moved to Illinois in 2012 to attend NIU and never left. I graduated in 2015 with a BA in Political Science and minors in Spanish and Nonprofit Management and in 2025 with a JD. Go Huskies!

What is the path that brought you to WCMA?

While I worked various jobs throughout my 20s, I spent most of time with the Illinois Counseling Association. When I left, it was an organization of 3,000+ members and had 3 full-time staff. I wanted to stay in the association industry, narrowing my focus to policy, and that landed me in law school.

At NIU College of Law, our second and third years allow the opportunity for graduate assistantships. At the time I started looking, I reached out to some contacts that I knew including



one at the Center for Governmental Studies who I had been connected with while doing some marketing work for the Village of Hinckley. I quickly found myself falling in love with local government through projects I was working on. Every time I mentioned my background, inevitably someone would tell me that Dawn and I needed to talk. We had a conversation about 6 months into my assistantship, I joined the association team, and the rest is history.

I love associations. There is no other place that brings together passionate people the same way that an association does. I am a mission-driven individual, and ultimately, your passion and the mission of the association will be my driving force from here on out.

If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be?

I was told by WCMA President, Steve Volkert, this would be a question in my interview and that there was a correct answer. While he was teasing me with it and he did not bring that question forward during my interview, I did take some time to think about it, and I actually believe my answer will give you all some insight into me.

My initial instinct is the tree of knowledge. I am always seeking out information: I ask questions and never think I know enough about any topic. As is shown by my nontraditional path in school, I love being a student. It also ties into my passion for associations – associations are full of lifelong learners.

If more traditional, I would be an oak tree. Oaks are known for their strength and longevity. They withstand storms and provide shelter for many creatures. I value resilience and the ability to weather challenges, and I strive to be a source of stability for those around me.

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And now for a few rapid fire questions to get to know a little bit more about Rachel:

- What was your first job, and what's a lesson you learned from it that you still use today?
 - Babysitting. A lesson I learned as a babysitter is to meet kids where they are at, and that ultimately adults are just kids in bigger bodies.

- What's a hobby you're passionate about?
 - Supporting my local community! Whether that's talking up local businesses or participating in the committee that plans our local festivals.

- What's a professional accomplishment you are most proud of?
 - Graduating law school with honors through a very chaotic phase of life.

- What's your biggest takeaway from your previous roles that you'll bring to this new position?
 - If you've met me, you'll probably know I'm a yapper. But I've learned the value of listening. While I'm naturally talkative, I've found that more weight is given to my words when I take the time to listen first and speak less.

- What are your favorite podcasts?
 - Up First, Armchair Expert, Your Mom & Dad Pod, Giggly Squad

- What's one of the most interesting places you've ever traveled to, and why?
 - The Netherlands on study abroad because I got to soak things in so much deeper during my extended stay. Also, the Canadian side of Niagara Falls, it's beautiful and full of wineries specializing in sparkling wine.

- What excites you most about working with this association and its members?
 - As I said, your passion fuels my own. I am most excited to forge these professional connections and friendships with you all.

- What do you hope to accomplish in your first year in this role?
 - My first year will be focused on shadowing Dawn, soaking in her knowledge, and learning the ropes, but that doesn't mean I won't be getting things done. The most tangible goal I have is to establish a more consistent social media presence from the association.

- What's a challenge or opportunity facing the industry that you're eager to tackle?
 - Recruitment. Both into our membership and into professional local government management. I hope to find new and creative ways to connect with the next generation of local government leaders.

- What's one thing you want members to know about you?
 - I'm a sucker for karaoke and sweets.

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WCMA Executive Board Approved Revenue Changes for 2026 Fiscal Year

The WCMA Executive Board has officially approved a series of recommendations from its Ad Hoc Committee on Additional Revenue lead by Treasurer, Tyler Burkhart, implementing several small changes to membership fees, conference registration, sponsorship tiers, and new service fees. These changes, effective for the **2026 fiscal year**, aim to bolster the association's finances, address rising inflationary costs, and fund strategic initiatives like expanding internship grant dollars.

Context and Financial Rationale

The WCMA Ad Hoc Committee on Additional Revenue, comprising six volunteer members of the Executive Board, conducted a thorough review of the association's financial position. The primary driver for these changes is the difficulty the executive officers have faced in balancing the budget in recent cycles due to inflationary costs.

The committee was also motivated by a desire to implement new initiatives arising from strategic planning discussions, particularly expanding internship grant dollars to municipalities.

The committee emphasized that its recommendations were carefully weighed against the fee structures of other state associations in the Midwest, ensuring that none of the proposed increases would place the WCMA in the upper tier compared to its peer organizations. The committee consciously avoided increasing the ratio used to compute membership rates as they determined the ratio already accounts for inflation due to year-to-year wage increases for members.

Key Revenue Changes Approved

The newly approved changes are projected to generate an estimated **\$27,000** in additional revenue and are designed to spread the financial impact across various groups, including members, sponsors, recruiters, and municipalities.

Membership Fee Adjustments

- **Removal of Chief Administrative Officer Membership Cap:** The maximum membership fee for the Chief Administrative Officer membership has been eliminated.
- **Increase in Minimum Membership Fees:** The minimum fee for a full membership and assistant membership will increase from \$50 to \$75.

Conference and Professional Development Fees

- **Regular Conference Registration Increase:** The fee for regular conference registration will increase (primarily to cover rising food costs):
 - For members, it rises from \$245 to \$260.
 - For non-members, it increases from \$375 to \$410.
- **New Webinar Fee Structure:** A \$25 fee will be instituted to sign up for professional development webinars.

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- Members will still receive two free webinars per year, with the other two incurring the \$25 fee.
- Non-members will be charged the \$25 fee for all webinars.

New Job Advertisement Fees

A fee structure is being introduced for all job advertisements posted on the job board or sent via email to the membership:

Job Posting Type	Member Fee	Non-Member Fee
Job Board Postings for Manager, Assistant Manager, and Intern positions	\$0	\$50
Job Board Postings for all other Positions (non-manager, non-assistant manager, or non-intern)	\$50	\$100
Email Job Postings (Sent out directly to membership via Executive Director)	\$150	\$250

Amendment to Silver Sponsorship Level

The association's sponsorship tiers will be amended to modify Silver Sponsor privileges at conferences:

- **Silver Sponsors:** Will receive one complimentary exhibit space and one attendee registration for *either* the Winter or the Summer Conference—**not both**.
 - Silver Sponsors are still welcome to attend both conferences at the discounted member rate of \$260 per attendee. However, the complimentary benefits apply to only one conference at the Silver level

Thanks to Committee Volunteers!

- Tyler Burkart, Village of Brown Deer
- Roy Atkinson, City of Altoona
- Inga Cushman, Village of Cottage Grove
- Josh Finch, City of Waupaca
- Scott Kluver, City of Park Falls
- Steve Volkert, City of Hartford

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WCMA 2026 SPONSORSHIP

We believe strong partnerships with the private sector enhance our ability to connect members with the services, products, and expertise that support effective local government. As we look ahead to 2026, we want to share an important update regarding our **Silver Level Sponsorship**.

Beginning in 2026, **Silver Sponsors will receive complimentary exhibit space and one attendee registration for either the Winter or the Summer Conference—not both.** You are still welcome to attend both conferences at the discounted member rate of \$260 per attendee. However, the complimentary benefits apply to **only one conference** at the Silver level.

We hope having this information now helps with your planning and budgeting for the upcoming year.

WCMA 2026 Sponsored Event Schedule:

- **Winter Conference**
February 25–27, 2026
Marriott, Oshkosh, WI
- **Summer Conference**
June 24–26, 2026
La Crosse Center, La Crosse, WI
- **WCMA Member Social event at the ICMA Annual Conference**
October 19, 2026
Long Beach/Los Angeles County, CA (Location TBD)
- **Women’s Leadership Conference**
November 19–20, 2026
Blue Harbor Resort, Sheboygan, WI

Additional Sponsorship Opportunities

Silver, Gold, and Platinum sponsors may also add one or more of the following optional sponsorships (limit two per category):

- WCMA Member Social at ICMA Annual Conference – \$1,500
- Winter Conference Social Event – \$1,500
- Summer Conference Social Event – \$1,500
- 5K Run/Walk at Winter or Summer Conference – \$250

Sponsorship of the Women’s Leadership Conference is open to all. See the attached for details!

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2026 Sponsorship Renewal

The Corporate Partnership Program runs from **January 1 to December 31** each year. We would be honored to have you renew your Corporate Partner membership for 2026.

Attached, you'll find the sponsorship application form with full details and benefits. Note that each application may be subject to the approval of the WCMA Board of Directors. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at **815-753-0923** or dpeters@niu.edu.

**New applications will be held until after the November Executive Board Meeting for review.*

On behalf of the Wisconsin City/County Management Association (WCMA), thank you to our Corporate Partners for their support. The ongoing success of WCMA depends on many factors—but few are as vital as the generous financial contributions from sponsors.



WCMA Corporate Sponsorship Program

The Wisconsin City/County Management Association (WCMA) is dedicated to promoting excellence in professional local government management throughout the state. We advocate for continuous improvement in municipal and county administration and provide critical support to our members as they strive for the highest standards of professional proficiency.

A key element in WCMA’s ongoing success is the generous financial support of our corporate partners. These partnerships not only strengthen our organization but also create valuable opportunities for collaboration between the public and private sectors.

By joining WCMA as a corporate sponsor, your organization will help advance our mission while gaining visibility and connection with Wisconsin’s local government leaders. We believe that strategic partnerships enhance our collective knowledge and enable municipalities and counties to access innovative products, services, and expertise.

We invite you to support WCMA through our Corporate Sponsorship Program, available at the following levels:

- Platinum Level \$6,500 (Limited to 4 Sponsors)
- Gold Level \$3,500
- Silver Level \$2,500
- Bronze Level \$1,000

Attached you will find a detailed overview of the valuable benefits associated with each level of corporate sponsorship. These benefits include direct access to key local government decision-makers, exclusive opportunities to showcase your organization to municipal and county leaders, up-to-date insights on public sector trends, and much more.

All sponsorship applications are subject to review and approval by the WCMA Board of Directors. Sponsorships are valid for one calendar year, though applications are welcomed and considered at any time throughout the year.

Proceeds from the Corporate Sponsorship Program directly support WCMA initiatives, including:

- Enhanced educational programming and conference sessions
- Internship opportunities that help cultivate the next generation of professional managers
- Dynamic networking events designed to foster meaningful connections

Your support makes a lasting impact on the future of professional local government management in Wisconsin. We look forward to partnering with you.

If you have any questions, please contact WCMA Executive Director, Dawn S. Peters at (815) 753- 0923 or e-mail her at dpeters@niu.edu. We look forward to your participation in the WCMA Corporate Sponsorship Program and thank you for your consideration.

WCMA Board of Directors

WCMA Corporate Sponsor Code of Ethics

To further the mission and goals of the WCMA Corporate Partnership Program and to reinforce WCMA’s continuing commitment to enhancing the quality and professionalism of local government, a Corporate Sponsor Code of Ethics (mirroring the ideals embodied in ICMA’s Code of Ethics) was adopted by WCMA’s Board in December 2013 to guide Corporate Partners in their activities with WCMA and its members. These principles shall govern the conduct and actions of WCMA Corporate Partners, who shall:

1. Be dedicated to the concepts of effective and democratic local government by responsible elected officials and believe that professional management is essential to achieving these goals.
2. Affirm the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government and maintain a constructive, creative, and practical attitude toward local government affairs.
3. Be dedicated to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in all facets of the relationship, so that the partners merit the respect and confidence of members of the corporate organization and members of WCMA, local government elected officials and employees, and the public.

4. Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of the public.
5. Recognize and support WCMA members’ commitment to career-long learning and improvement of local government management techniques.
6. Encourage communication and participation in information- sharing among the private sector, local government and the public.
7. Resist any encroachment on local government managers’ professional responsibilities, believing that professional local government managers should be free to carry out official policies without outside interference or influence.
8. Respect the open, competitive purchasing process of local governments, and provide full value in any goods or services for which public funds are accepted.
9. Neither seek nor grant favors; believe that aggrandizement or profit secured by the use of confidential information, abuse of trust, or the promise of personal enrichment is dishonest.

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WCMA Corporate Sponsorship Program Benefits

Platinum Level - \$6,500 (Limited to 4 Sponsors)

- Exclusive keynote sponsor at winter or summer conference (one sponsor per conference keynote); includes recognition prior to the keynote address
- Four Complimentary Consulting Memberships
- A page on the WCMA website which includes your company's description and contact information as well as a link to your website
- Business card sized advertisements in each of the four quarterly newsletters
- Exhibit space at the Winter Conference AND Summer Conference
- Participant lists with e-mail addresses prior to each conference (e-mailed in an Excel file)
- Inclusion of your company logo and description in the Exhibit Guide for Winter Conference AND Summer Conference
- Recognition in conference programs as a corporate sponsor at the Platinum Level
- Four complimentary attendees at the Winter Conference AND Summer Conference
- An opportunity to publish an article in a quarterly WCMA newsletter
- Support the Internship Grant program
- Eligible for additional sponsorship options
- One marketing email sent to WCMA members

Gold Level - \$3,500

- Two Complimentary Consulting Memberships
- A page on the WCMA website which includes your company's description and contact information as well as a link to your website
- Business card sized advertisements in each of the four quarterly newsletters
- Exhibit space at the Winter Conference AND Summer Conference
- Participant lists with e-mail addresses prior to each conference (e-mailed in an Excel file)
- Inclusion of your company logo and description in the Exhibitor's Guide for Winter Conference AND Summer Conference
- Recognition in conference programs as a corporate sponsor at the Gold Level
- Two complimentary attendees at the Winter Conference AND Summer Conference
- An opportunity to publish an article in a quarterly WCMA newsletter
- Support the Internship Grant program
- Eligible for additional sponsorship options
- One marketing email sent to WCMA members

Silver Level - \$2,500

- One Complimentary Consulting Membership
- A page on the WCMA website which includes your company's description and contact information as well as a link to your website
- Business card sized advertisements in each of the four quarterly newsletters
- Exhibit space at the Winter Conference OR Summer Conference
- Recognition in conference programs as a corporate sponsor at the Silver Level
- One complimentary attendee at the Winter Conference OR Summer Conference
- Support the Internship Grant program
- Eligible for additional sponsorship options
- One marketing email sent to WCMA members

Bronze Level - \$1,000

- One Complimentary Consulting Membership
- A page on the WCMA website which includes your company's description and contact information as well as a link to your website
- Business card sized advertisements in four quarterly newsletters
- Recognition in the conference program as a corporate sponsor at the Bronze Level
- One marketing email sent to WCMA members

Additional Sponsorship Opportunities available to Platinum, Gold and Silver Level Sponsors:

- WCMA Membership Social Event at the Annual ICMA Conference
- Winter Conference Social Event
- Summer Conference Social Event Sponsor
- Summer Conference 5K Run/Walk Sponsor

2 of each available. Choose multiple and/or choose to be the exclusive sponsor of any of the above on the form below.

Women's Leadership Seminar Sponsorship Levels:

Platinum Keynote Sponsors (\$2000) – Two Available

- Logo in the program
- Introduce one of two keynotes
- Recognized at seminar
- Signage at door
- Includes 4 conference registrations
- Conference registration list with email contacts

Gold Sponsors (\$1000)

- Logo in the program
- Recognized at seminar
- Includes 2 conference registrations
- Conference registration list with email contacts

Silver Sponsors (\$500)

- Logo in the program
- Recognized at seminar
- Includes 1 conference registration

Bronze Sponsors (\$250)

- Logo in the program
- Recognized at seminar

continued on next page

WCMA Corporate Sponsor Program Invoice



Company Name:

Website:

Address: City/State/Zip:

Consulting Member Name: <input type="text"/>	2nd Consulting Member Name: <input type="text"/>
	(Gold & Platinum only)
Email Address: <input type="text"/>	Email Address: <input type="text"/>
Phone: <input type="text"/>	Phone: <input type="text"/>
3rd Consulting Member Name: <input type="text"/>	4th Consulting Member Name: <input type="text"/>
(Platinum Only)	(Platinum Only)
Email Address: <input type="text"/>	Email Address: <input type="text"/>
Phone: <input type="text"/>	Phone: <input type="text"/>

Sponsorship Level:

Platinum \$6500 Gold \$3500 Silver \$2500

Bronze \$1000

As a silver sponsor I will exhibit at

Winter Conference
 -OR- Summer Conference

conference dates & locations can be found here:
<https://wcma-wi.org/172/Conference-Center>

Additional Sponsorships for Platinum/Gold/Silver Sponsors :

- WCMA Member Dinner at the ICMA Annual Conference (2 available) \$1500
- Winter Conference Social Event Sponsor (2 available) \$1500
- Summer Conference Social Event Sponsor (2 available) \$1500
- Summer Conference 5K Run/Walk Sponsor (2 available) \$200

Women's Leadership Seminar Sponsorship :

Platinum Keynote \$2000 Gold \$1000 Silver \$500 Bronze \$250

by enrolling my company, we agree to adhere to the WCMA Corporate Sponsor Code of Ethics

email the following items to WCMA@niu.edu

- Your logo and a business card sized (3.5"x 2") advertisement for the newsletter. Both files should be jpg or png in RGB format with at least 300 dpi resolution.
- A text file description of your firm and its services to be included in the exhibitor guide and on the WCMA website.

Sponsorship Total \$_____

Return completed form and payment to:
 WCMA
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 148 N 3rd Street
 DeKalb, IL 60115

To pay via credit card with a 3% processing fee
 E-mail e-invoice request to wcma@niu.edu

ETHICS MATTER! THRIVING IN THE 24/7 WORLD OF POLITICS

Do you remember the days when there was a defined campaign season? In the not-too-distant past, electing candidates for public office was akin to the rotation and tilt of the Earth. Both had defined seasons with the caveat of course that politics, like mother nature, can be unpredictable. With each, we had our equinoxes and solstices. A time for activity and a time for rest. The predictability of seasons gave local government managers and their staff clarity. During the campaign season, astute staff kept their heads down, avoided meetings with elected officials designed as campaign photo ops, and curtailed their social activities. An annual community picnic once regularly attended would be off-limits during campaign season when all the candidates made an appearance.

Between the swearing in and the next primary, that period of détente provided all parties with the opportunity to focus on the actual work of serving constituents. While ever vigilant, of course, for the off chance of getting drawn inadvertently into politics, this period did provide the manager and staff with needed breathing room. Parked for a moment were the concerns about ulterior motives of an elected official who sought a meeting with constituents or convened a meeting with elected officials and community leaders to talk about an issue. The focus during this period is on issues, not campaigns. Those days are gone. The campaigning is now a 24/7 proposition. Perhaps influenced by the culture at the federal level where both newly sworn officials and incumbents alike seem fixated and focused on prevailing in the next election, the season for politicking at the local level seems far less defined as well. In this new environment, managers and staff are advised to be on guard and ever vigilant in recognizing and managing the candidate politics. To that end, here is some advice that applies to all ICMA members working for a local government. It is sound advice to share with all your staff so that they can avoid the pitfalls of politics.

Voting

ICMA members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to vote. If you live in a state with closed primaries, you are permitted under the ICMA Code of Ethics to register with a political party for the purpose of exercising that right.

Candidate Endorsements

To be effective in doing your work on behalf of your local government, do not endorse any candidates running for any city, county, special district, school, state, or federal offices. Activities to be avoided include public statements of support, yard signs, and bumper stickers, as well as more subtle signs of support, such as appearing on the dais of a campaign rally with the candidate or posting a selfie on social media wearing the candidate's campaign gear. These activities constitute an endorsement.

Financial Support

Whether it is for an individual seeking elected office, an incumbent running again, a political party, or another organization that makes direct donations to candidates, members should not make a financial donation. All donations, regardless of how modest, are a matter of public record with both names and occupations listed. While the donation may be tiny in the grand scheme of things, you are publicly stating your support for the candidate.

What about other fundraising events, like private parties hosted by supporters or going as a guest to an event? All these efforts, whether a direct appeal or not, are intended to generate financial support for a candidate. For that reason, they should be avoided. The election guideline in the ICMA Code of Ethics states that members shall not make financial contributions or participate in fundraising activities for individuals seeking or holding elected office.

Candidate Debates

Forums or debates sponsored by independent organizations provide everyone with the opportunity to learn more about the candidates and their positions. For that reason, you can attend as a private citizen or staff member. What's important is to keep a low profile and be prepared to respond if someone at a local event tries to draw you into the debate. Practice this response: "I am just here to learn more about the issues and have no comment."

Candidate Rallies

While political, there is a valid argument that they are an opportunity to hear more about the candidate's position on the issues. Sitting on the dais behind the candidate is not a good

continued on next page

idea. Keeping a lower profile in the back of the venue is the best option. Attending a single event is a learning opportunity. Attending multiple events crosses the line into a show of support and endorsement for the candidate.

Issues

The guideline on personal advocacy of issues makes it clear that ICMA members do not lose their right to express their opinion. Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to voice their opinion on public issues. Members may advocate for issues of personal interest only when doing so does not conflict with the performance of their official duties. If you want to advocate for a position, you can do so. First, make it clear that the opinion you offer is your own. Second, don't use public resources, including your official title, to support a personal stance. Third, focus on the issue not the candidate. Lastly, you can join and/or make a financial contribution to an issue-oriented advocacy organization. You can march in a protest or rally or participate in a campaign designed to raise awareness. You can put a bumper sticker on your car (just not on a city-issued one).

In the current climate where every issue is highly politized and partisan, taking a stance can seem very political. For that reason, it's very wise to consider the consequences of speaking out. It's not a reason to stand down or stay silent. Just a critical factor to consider.

Family Activities

What do you do if your kids want to put up a yard sign? Or protest? Or does your spouse want to make a financial donation? The ICMA Code of Ethics only applies to the conduct of the members. Your spouse can make a campaign donation, even from a joint account, if they sign the check. The yard sign or bumper sticker on the family car are stickier issues to address: how would anyone else know that it is your spouse or child who supports the candidate and not you? Best to have that candid discussion with family about how their political activity can affect you.

On a personal level, you have the right to vote for the candidate of your choice. On a professional level, whether the elected official was your choice or not, consider your obligation to work effectively with all elected officials on behalf of your

community. That county commissioner, state representative, or congressman that represents your local government and the residents will be your ally in bringing needed support during a natural disaster or assistance on legislation. Publicly engaging on behalf of or in opposition to an elected official will impair your ability to serve your official position. Some may respond, "But I live in a city or state that is dominated by one party so what's the harm in engaging?" Just because it is nonpartisan or dominated by a single party, it doesn't insulate the process from party politics or party factions. In every campaign, there are winners and losers. Don't bet that you will always select the winner. Best to exercise your right to participate in the democratic process while observing a politically neutral stance.

by

MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM, is former director of member services and ethics director, ICMA, Washington, D.C. (mperego@icma.org).

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Call for Internships & Mentors for College Students

Since the start of the 2025-26 academic school year, we received close to 15 students looking for an internship for the academic year and continue to see them coming in. The majority of these students are in the Madison area but often hail from across the State. The Talent and Recruitment Committee would appreciate your help by expressing your interest to take on an intern, assigning a special project to a student, or at a minimum, reaching out to 1-2 of the students so they can engage with a professional and learn more about the profession. Review the reflections in this issue of the newsletter to see how internships can affect a young person's career path.

Please reach out to Tyler Burkart at tburkart@browndeerwi.gov if you are interested in helping. We'd like a professional to contact all of the students, so their interest in local government flourishes.

Thank you,
Tyler Burkart
Village Manager, Brown Deer, Wisconsin
WCMA President-Elect

Balancing Political Neutrality with Personal Advocacy Resource List

- **Balancing Political Neutrality with Personal Advocacy; Free webinar for ICMA Members, June 13:** <https://icma.org/events/balancing-political-neutrality-personal-advocacy>
- **ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines:** <https://www.icma.org/page/icma-code-ethics>
- **ICMA's Civility landing page:** <https://www.icma.org/topics/civility>
- **What If I Want to March?** Taking part in our democracy while modeling the civility and non-partisanship at the core of our profession by Kate P. Fitzpatrick, ICMA-CM; William (Bill) J. Fraser, ICMA-CM; Opal D. Mauldin-Jones, ICMA-CM; and Martha Perego, ICMA-CM | March 2020 | PM Magazine – Article: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/what-if-i-want-march>
- **Reclaiming Civility: The Cornerstone of Trust and Leadership in Local Government;** Why civility is crucial for governance and community leadership by Katryna Peart | May 2025 | https://icma.org/articles/article/reclaiming-civility-cornerstone-trust-and-leadership-local-government?utm_source=marketingcloud&utm_medium=email&&utm_content=20250510_NL_Weekly&utm_term=Reclaiming+Civility%3a+The+Cornerstone+of+Trust+and+Leadership+in+Local+Government&utm_campaign=newsletter
- **ETHICS MATTER! Reflections on the Code's Value Throughout My Career;** A former ICMA regional vice president's perspective on the Code of Ethics as we celebrate Ethics Awareness Month by Ken Parker, ICMA-CM | March 2025 | PM Magazine – Article: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/ethics-mattertm-reflections-codes-value-throughout-my-career>
- **INSIGHTS: Q&A with Dawn Peters on Ethics and Advocacy for the Profession;** Recognized for her advocacy for professional local government management, Dawn Peters is a true and tireless ambassador in service to the profession | March 2025 | PM Magazine – Article: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/insights-qa-dawn-peters-ethics-and-advocacy-profession>
- **Career Compass No. 112: Can You Show Your True Self at Work?** Given the culture of an organization, you may feel uncomfortable revealing who you really are and what you believe. Is it your leadership responsibility to be authentic? by Dr. Frank Benest | December 2024 | Article: <https://www.icma.org/articles/article/career-compass-no-112-can-you-show-your-true-self-work>
- **ETHICS MATTER!™ Political Neutrality in an Era of Polarization;** Sharing my journey to political neutrality, a foundational value for the profession by Jessica Cowles | August 2024 | PM Magazine – Article: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/ethics-mattertm-political-neutrality-era-polarization>
- **Q&A: How Was the ICMA Code of Ethics Valuable to Your Career?** Advice from ICMA Senior Advisors | June 2024 | PM Magazine – Article: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/qa-how-was-icma-code-ethics-valuable-your-career>

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- **ETHICS MATTER! There's Always an Election Somewhere!** The ethical obligation to be politically neutral in the era of the perpetual election cycle by Jessica Cowles | October 2023 | PM Magazine – Article: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/ethics-matter-theres-always-election-somewhere>
- **ETHICS MATTER! Thriving in the 24/7 World of Politics;** Practical advice for you and your staff by Martha Perego, ICMA-CM | April 2023 | PM Magazine – Article: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/ethics-matter-thriving-247-world-politics>
- **Democrat or Republican Manager? Why It's Crucial to Stay Politically Neutral;** Professional city and county managers must adhere to the spirit of the ICMA Code of Ethics and remain politically neutral in today's hyper-politicized environment by Matthew Candland, ICMA-CM | August 2022 | PM Magazine – Article: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/democrat-or-republican-manager-why-its-crucial-stay-politically-neutral>
- **Managing Council/Staff Relationships in an Election Year and Beyond;** Understanding the importance of the relationship between the CAO and elected officials before, during, and after election by Darrin Tangeman, ICMA-CM; Mike Conduff, ICMA-CM; Cheryl Hilvert, ICMA-CM; and Martin Bernal | August 2022 | PM Magazine – Article <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/managing-councilstaff-relationships-election-year-and-beyond>
- **Returning to the Politics Versus Administration Debate;** Defining the “political” role of managers and their role in the policy process by Kimberly Nelson, PhD | May 2022 | PM Magazine – Article: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/returning-politics-versus-administration-debate>
- **What Is Political Acumen?** A toolkit from ICMA affiliate Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) supporting city managers/municipal administrators in their relationship with elected officials by Jennifer Goodine, executive director, CAMA (Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators) | February 2022 | Article: <https://icma.org/articles/article/what-political-acumen>
- **ETHICS MATTER! Being Politically Neutral in a Partisan World;** How best to give voice to your values by Martha Perego, ICMA-CM | April 2021 | PM Magazine – Article: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/ethics-matter-being-politically-neutral-partisan-world>
- **How to Deal with Water Cooler Talk in the Workplace;** Three experienced managers offer their insights on encouraging a work culture built on trust by asking three questions that help guide managers in performing this important work | May 2020 | Blog Post: <https://icma.org/blog-posts/how-deal-water-cooler-talk-workplace>
- **Checklist for Fostering Good Governance** <https://icma.org/documents/checklist-fostering-good-governance>
- **Career Compass No. 94: Ten Principles for Leading in Turbulence** <https://icma.org/articles/article/career-compass-no-94-ten-principles-leading-turbulence>

ICMA Coaching Webinars Available Free and On-Demand

- **Ethics at the Helm: Staying the Course Despite Unethical Elected Officials** https://shop.learninglab.icma.org/products/13183910-a?_pos=15&_sid=fb0e9f2cc&_ss=r
- **Fostering Civil Discourse;** How do we talk about issues that matter? https://shop.learninglab.icma.org/products/10536265-a?_pos=5&_sid=fb0e9f2cc&_ss=r
- **Managing Council/Staff Relationships in an Election Year;** <https://shop.learninglab.icma.org/products/10396246-a>



Do You Do Business with Local Governments in Wisconsin?

Join WCMA and Get in Front of the Key Decision Makers in Local Government Across Wisconsin!

The Wisconsin City/County Management Association (WCMA) was first formed in 1969 and serves as the state's affiliate of the larger International City/County Management Association. With close to 250 members who act as the Chief Operating Officers for their communities right here in Wisconsin, being a Corporate Sponsor of this organization is the best opportunity for businesses to build relationships with those making decisions affecting your future.

Contact WCMA Executive Director, Dawn Peters, at (815) 753-0923 or dpeters@niu.edu to learn about how you can best position your business for local government work in the future.

You can also visit WCMA's website at: <https://wcma-wi.org/196/Corporate-Sponsors>. Once there you can see our current sponsors and the benefits of joining the WCMA Corporate Sponsor Program.

INTERNING AT PARK FALLS

by Isabel Grimes
August 22, 2025

As the summer of 2025 rolled around, I knew I needed an internship in order to gain necessary experience, and to also have some clarity on my path moving forward. With fingers crossed, I sent my application and cover letter to Park Falls' City Hall, and with great fortune the City Administrator, Scott Kluver, said he was open to take me under his wing for the season. My internship has accomplished what I had set out to do: I have gained important skills that will help me with my education and future career, and I have been able to see the reality of one of my potential career paths.

Over the summer, I worked on a variety of projects, including drafting Requests for Proposals and memos, assisting Mr. Kluver with zoning map updates, identifying improperly zoned parcels on Beacon, developing an AI policy, conducting research, and completing other administrative tasks. These experiences provided me with valuable knowledge that I likely wouldn't have gained through independent research alone. Being directly involved in these projects allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of municipal processes and administrative responsibilities—insights that can only come from hands-on experience.

In addition to the City's responsibilities, I have also gained valuable insight into the working environment of a local City government and the formalities that come with it. While my exposure was limited compared to that of my coworkers, I had the opportunity to observe the challenges they faced and how they navigated them. These experiences taught me how to effectively engage with the public, adapt to a wide range of personalities and preferences, and find meaning in even the smallest moments throughout the day. I also came to understand that, while it's impossible to satisfy everyone, witnessing the direct impact of your work—and receiving the occasional, sincere compliment—makes the effort truly worthwhile. Gaining this experience has prepared me for the interactions and situations I may encounter in my career, and I will carry these lessons forward as I navigate future professional challenges.

Lessons learned about communication also occurred through assignments like drafting RFPs and memos and speaking at



Council meetings. My time at Park Falls City Hall has significantly strengthened my writing and public speaking skills. I saw my writing improve not only in general clarity and organization but also in adapting to the specific communication standards of municipal government. I learned how to write effectively for a small, diverse audience, where word choice and tone are especially important.

Public speaking was another essential part of my role. Adapting my speaking style helped me communicate more clearly and directly. Although it was initially uncomfortable, repeatedly speaking at meetings helped me overcome my fear of public speaking and become more confident in presenting to an audience.

Strong communication skills—both written and verbal—are crucial to my future career, whether in municipal government or law. As an attorney, I'll need to explain legal concepts in plain language, build trust with clients, and advocate effectively in court. In municipal government, I would need to break down complex ordinances and procedures for the public and convey information efficiently. In both fields, the ability to write clearly and speak confidently will be indispensable.

Beyond strengthening my writing and speaking skills, this internship also provided me with valuable professional connections. In late June, Mr. Kluver generously invited me to attend the Wisconsin City/County Management Association (WCMA) conference in Sturgeon Bay. This experience gave me the opportunity to meet local government professionals from

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outside of Park Falls and gain insight into how municipal work varies across communities. While I was initially nervous to network with so many new people, everyone was welcoming and approachable.

One person who stood out was Dawn Peters, Assistant Director at the Center for Governmental Studies. Through her, I connected with Denise Burchard, Assistant to the Chair for the MPA Program at Northern Illinois University. Our conversation introduced me to NIU's dual JD/MPA program—an option I hadn't previously considered due to my initial focus on Wisconsin law schools. That single connection has broadened my perspective on graduate education and made me seriously consider a path I may have otherwise overlooked. Without Mrs. Peters and that conversation, I might have missed out on an opportunity that aligns closely with my career goals.

Of course, I cannot address connections without acknowledging the wonderful staff at Park Falls. This includes not only those working at the offices of City Hall, but also the DPW staff, the Fire and Police Chief, the Council Members, and the Mayor. Everyone was welcoming, supportive, and genuinely kind. I'm especially grateful for their patience as I asked questions and learned the ropes—especially Scott Kluver. He not only answered all of my questions, but also went above and beyond by sharing insights I wouldn't have thought to ask about, inviting me to educational lectures, and keeping me engaged with absorbing projects throughout my internship. Working alongside such dedicated and knowledgeable individuals opened my eyes to the upsides of municipal government—something I am now seriously considering as a future career path.

This summer internship also provided unexpected financial support that will help me pursue further education, whether in law school or graduate school. When Mr. Kluver and I first discussed the position, we both understood it would likely be unpaid—a condition I was completely comfortable with, as the experience alone was well worth it. However, Mr. Kluver went above and beyond by securing funding for me through the WCMA and Northwest Wisconsin CEP. I'm incredibly grateful for his efforts, as the income allowed me to save a meaningful amount toward my future education. Without that support, continuing my academic journey would have presented greater financial challenges.

Overall, my internship at Park Falls City Hall has been instrumental in preparing me for my future career. I've become more comfortable in a formal work environment, developed

greater confidence and clarity in both my writing and public speaking, and gained a solid understanding of the functions and responsibilities of municipal government. Just as importantly, I had the opportunity to work alongside supportive individuals who made the experience even more meaningful. I'm incredibly grateful for my time here and truly satisfied with everything I've learned and accomplished.

INTERNSHIP REFLECTION- VILLAGE OF WEST MILWAUKEE CLERK'S OFFICE

By Valerie Hertig, Intern, Village of West Milwaukee

Since starting my internship with the Village of West Milwaukee, I have had the opportunity to expand my interests in local government and gain firsthand insight into the daily tasks involved in a Clerk's office. Over the course of my internship, I learned how essential the work done by a Clerk's department is to citizens of local communities. The Wisconsin City/County Management Association internship provided a unique experience that allowed my professional skills to flourish. Throughout the summer, I assisted the Village by issuing permits and licenses, taking tax payments, maintaining records, filing, preparing agendas or roll calls, and writing minutes for official meetings. These tasks taught me the importance of accuracy and attention to detail. I quickly realized that even small errors could have significant consequences, which helped me become more confident in asking questions and seeking guidance when needed. I was fortunate to work alongside coworkers who demonstrated professionalism, efficiency, and integrity—qualities that are essential to maintaining public trust and ensuring the department functions smoothly.

Growing trust between the department and citizens of the Village was one of the most important lessons I learned and maintaining that healthy relationship between myself and citizens was crucial. Those interactions helped me improve my communication skills and taught me how to navigate a conversation involving sensitive information with discretion and respect. This exposure has solidified my interest in pursuing a career in government or public service with a clear sense of responsibilities and expectations associated with those fields. Overall, this experience was extremely rewarding both educationally and professionally, while also strengthening my commitment to contributing positively to my community.

WCMA WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

Effective Leadership: Charging into the Storms You Face

NOVEMBER 20 & 21, 2025

AT THE HEIDEL HOUSE IN
GREEN LAKE, WI

Schedule at a Glance

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20

12 p.m. Registration & POWER Luncheon

1:00 p.m. Welcome, Introductions & Opening Keynote: Communication for Effective Leadership: Charging into the Storms You Face

3:00 p.m. Wire Fraud in Local Government Projects: Lessons from Chetek

4:00 p.m. Protecting Main Street from Malware: A Cyber Briefing for Busy Leaders

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21

7:45 a.m. Breakfast

8:30 a.m. When Integrity Fails: Identifying and Addressing Internal Fraud in Local Government Operations

9:45 a.m. How to Navigate a Difficult Situation with Board or Staff

11:00 a.m. Closing Keynote: The Energy Switch

The Women's Leadership Committee, an initiative by WCMA, is pleased to present the 8th Annual Women's Leadership Seminar. This two half-day long seminar provides an opportunity to come together to promote professional development, networking, and overall support for women in the profession. **Everyone, regardless of gender or level in the organization, is welcome to attend!**



Join your colleagues for dinner on Thursday, Nov. 20 at 6 p.m. A list of restaurants will be available. There will be a Committee Member Host at each location, and you can sign-up for your preferred restaurant at the registration table.

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Thursday, November 20

Noon – 1:00 p.m. Registration & POWER Luncheon

1:00 p.m. **Welcome, Introductions & Opening Keynote: Communication for Effective Leadership: Charging into the Storms You Face**
 How we lead is as important as who we lead. Leaders who are quick to tackle the issue they face and are energized with optimism get results because the people they serve are energized. Ted will share how to create a collective mindset that will drive your culture, increase engagement, and create a stronger team. This discussion will increase your ability to build capacity and motivate your team. Hundreds of thousands of people listen to Ted’s inspirational and practical weekly podcast (The Smart Thinking Podcast) and in this keynote Ted will share the way to increase your own capacity to charge into the storm.

Learning Objectives:

- Create a mindset for leading
- Acquire processes for engaging colleagues
- Review strategies for followership

Presenter: **Ted Neitzke**, CEO, Cooperative Education Service Agency 6

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas 4 Staff Effectiveness; 6 Strategic Leadership; and 14 Communication and Information Sharing

2:45 – 3 p.m. Break

3:00 – 3:45 p.m. **Wire Fraud in Local Government Projects: Lessons from Chetek**

In October 2023, the City of Chetek was hit by a sophisticated wire fraud scheme that diverted \$2.6 million intended for a critical infrastructure project. While the funds were ultimately recovered, the incident exposed how vulnerable even well-managed municipalities can be to fraud. This session takes you inside Chetek’s response—how city officials acted quickly, partnered with banks and federal investigators, and turned a crisis into a catalyst for stronger protections. Municipal leaders and staff will walk away with practical strategies to safeguard community funds, strengthen internal controls, and build resilience before fraud strikes.

Learning Objectives:

1. Recognize how fraudsters use spoofed emails and social engineering to target municipal projects
2. Examine Chetek’s rapid response with banks, law enforcement, and forensic experts to recover stolen funds
3. Identify practical fraud prevention measures such as dual approvals, two-step verification, and phishing awareness training
4. Develop proactive municipal protocols including contract safeguards and pre-established response plans
5. Understand how transparency, legal counsel involvement, and cultural vigilance build resilience against fraud

Presenter: **Laura Stelzner**, City Administrator/Treasurer, Chetek

Addresses ICMA Practice Area 11 Technological Literacy

3:45 – 4:00 Break

4:00 – 5:00 p.m. **Protecting Main Street from Malware: A Cyber Briefing for Busy Leaders**

This session will give you an overview of the current state of cyber threats in the state of Wisconsin, as well as who is being targeted. You will also learn about some of the favorite TTPs (Tactics, Techniques and Procedures) cybercriminals use and Why are they effective. Finally, you will learn about real-world practical tips and strategies that you can use to keep your communities (and yourselves!) safe.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the growing risks of cyber threats in local communities.
- Become more aware of how and why cyber-attacks happen
- Learn practical ways to help prevent cyber attacks

Presenters:

Karen Arthur, Cybersecurity Engineer II, Enterprise Infrastructure Security, Northwestern Mutual

Addresses ICMA Practice Area 11 Technological Literacy



WCMA Women’s Leadership Seminar

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Friday, November 21

7:45 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. When Integrity Fails: Identifying and Addressing Internal Fraud in Local Government Operations

Internal fraud can quietly erode public trust and financial stability within local governments. This session brings together insights from an accounting services manager, a local government administrator, and a representative from the municipal insurance industry to explore the full lifecycle of internal fraud—from early red flags to investigation, prevention, and recovery. Through real-world examples and practical strategies, attendees will learn how to strengthen internal controls, foster a culture of accountability, and respond effectively when fraud is suspected or discovered. Whether you're in finance, administration, or risk management, this session offers actionable guidance to protect your organization and the public resources it stewards.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize common red flags and behavioral indicators of internal fraud within local government operations.
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of finance, administration, and insurance professionals in investigating and responding to suspected fraud.
- Explore effective strategies for preventing internal fraud through internal controls, staff training, and organizational culture.
- Learn how to navigate the recovery process, including financial restitution, insurance claims, and rebuilding public trust.

Presenters: **Matt Becker**, President and CEO, League of Wisconsin Municipalities Mutual Insurance
Nicole Dunbar, CPA, Accounting Services Manager, KerberRose
Diane Rowe, Senior Community Development Administrator, MSA Professional Services

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas 8 Policy Facilitation and Implementation and 12 Financial Management and Budgeting

9:30 – 9:45 a.m. Break

9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. How to Navigate a Difficult Situation with Board or Staff

Managing people and personalities in the public sector is fulfilling and challenging work. At times Administrators, Managers, Department heads and staff will work with individuals whose mindset does not match their own. In these situations, it is important to continuously focus on the goal of moving the organization forward. This session is designed to give you some tools and strategies you can use when you encounter difficult situations and people to help you realign your perspective and keep marching towards your objectives.

Learning Objectives:

- Talk about the changing landscape in local politics and the world today that makes working in local government more challenging.
- Discuss some strategies for making it easier to work with staff and elected officials.
- Talk through real life scenarios to gain insight into how others are handling more controversial situations.

Presenters: **Steve Sorenson**, von Briesen & Rober, S.C. & **Dianne Robertson**, ICMA/WCMA Senior Advisor

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas 6 Strategic Leadership and 14 Communication and Information Sharing

10:45 – 11 a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. – Noon Closing Keynote: The Energy Switch

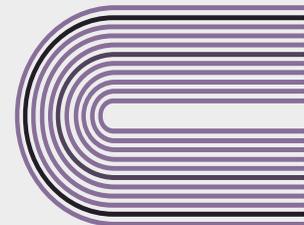
Add more, do more, and keep up with every role and expectation put in front of you. That is what it feels like in today's changing world. Awareness of that...is an untapped power. Discover the framework which will switch your reality of chaos and exhaustion toward liveliness, passion, and excitement for what the day will bring. A framework built from theory, experience, and all within your control to keep yourself on the right path and build agile teams.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn the energy management framework to embrace reality versus fighting it.
- Explore burnout contributors and factors of adaptability.
- Create a practical action plan in a ever-changing world.

Presenter: **Kelly Bubolz**, Speaker/Author/Burnout Guide, KB Training Connections, LLC

Addresses ICMA Practice Area 5 Personal Resiliency and Development



8th Annual WCMA Women's Leadership Seminar

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20 & FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21
 AT THE HEIDEL HOUSE
 653 ILLINOIS AVE
 GREEN LAKE, WI 54941

NAME: TITLE: EMPLOYER: EMAIL:	Contact Information _____ _____ _____ _____
	Registration Information <input type="checkbox"/> WCMA Member Rate \$125 <input type="checkbox"/> WCMA Member Rate: \$100 per person for 3 or more from the same organization <input type="checkbox"/> Student Rate \$25 <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Member Community Rate: \$175 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I am attending the Thursday evening dinner (pay on your own) <input type="checkbox"/> No, I will not be attending the Thursday evening dinner.
	Remit check payment for total amount to: WCMA, 148 N 3rd St., DeKalb, IL 60115 -OR- register online* at: https://WCMA8thWLS.eventbrite.com *convenience fees apply
	Lodging Information A block of rooms has been reserved for Thursday night at the <u>Heidel House</u> . For online reservations go to https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/CC44R6 or phone 920-807-0300 and be sure to mention WCMA Women's Leadership Seminar to get a discounted room for \$98 plus tax.





THRIVE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2025 COACHING PROGRAM

UPCOMING FREE WEBINARS – Register at icma.org/coachingwebinars

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12

Succession Planning: A Guide to Unlocking Potential and Preparing for Leadership Transitions

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16

AI-Powered Governance: Transforming Strategic Planning in Local Government

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

Resilience Reimagined: Building Unbreakable Communities, Teams, and Organizations

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

New Job Overnight: How to Make the Successful Transition

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15

Your Career, Your Compass: Proactive Career Development Strategies

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19

Workforce Revolution: Trends Transforming the Workforce and What You Can't Afford to Overlook

All Webinars start at 1:30pm Eastern time.

Miss a webinar? Watch it anytime!

Register and watch digital recordings from your ICMA Learning Lab Dashboard.

Don't miss out on these FREE 2025 coaching webinars.

REGISTER TODAY!



Additional free coaching resources at ICMA Coaching:

- Access digital recordings on ICMA's Learning Lab
- Career Compass monthly advice column
- CoachConnect for one-to-one coach matching
- Live speed coaching events, talent development resources, and more.

Join our list for coaching program updates and more. Email coaching@icma.org.



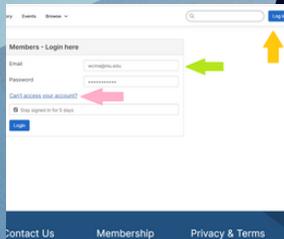
Learn more at icma.org/coaching

How to update your settings in WCMA Connected Community



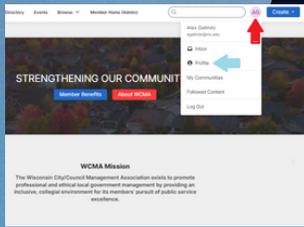
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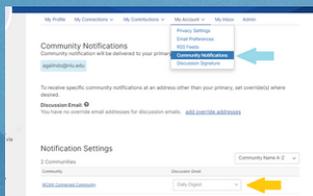
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Midwest Leadership Institute

Helping local government navigate a complex world in a time of disruptive change

Mission

To present an educational experience with intellectual depth and substance that focuses on the individual as leader and the person as a whole to encourage participants to connect interpersonally and emotionally to better lead themselves and others.

Values

- Education
- Scientific Objectivity
- Developmental Growth
- Health
- Discipline
- Ethical Behavior

More Information

To learn more about the Midwest Leadership Institute, takeaways, videos, and more, visit midwestleadershipinstitute.org or contact:

David Limardi
P: 847.533.0402
E: dlimardi@gmail.com

Robert Kiely
P: 847.703.3585
E: rrkiely@comcast.net

Dawn S. Peters
P: 815.753.0923
E: dpeters@niu.edu

Midwest Leadership Institute

Approach

The Midwest Leadership Institute is the premier institute for local government organizational leaders. Successful outcomes in local government require a deep understanding of interpersonal leadership. The ability to understand individual and organizational behavior and diagnose why people act the way they do is crucial. The courage and discipline to admit when you do not know what you do not know, which requires you to know yourself and your emotions, is important for an organizational leader.

Who Should Attend

Local government organizational leaders including chief administrative officers, assistants, department heads and others who are interested in leadership education focused on the theoretical and practical.

Join a network of organizational leaders who have participated in the Midwest Leadership Institute and who continue to assist one another with workplace and personal challenges and celebrate successes. Participants also receive ongoing educational materials through the "members only" section of the MLI website and receive invitations to participant only events.

Curriculum

The Institute is an intensive 4.5-day program with both an internal self-focus and an external organizational focus. The Institute consists of ten learning pods including lectures, exercises, and team discussions. The ten learning pods are as follows:

1. The State of Today and the Effect on the State of Tomorrow
2. Fundamental Concepts for Leading People
3. Judgment – The Foundation of Successful Leadership
4. Emotions – When Working with People Gets Tough
5. Power, Authority, Motivation, and Influence
6. Change: Resistance, Motivation, and Performance
7. The Relentless Pursuit of an Ethical Culture
8. Aligning Goals, Tasks, and Relationships
9. The Role of Self-Awareness in Leadership
10. Balancing Work, Family and Self

NEW
AJIL®
Assessing Judgment and Insight in Leadership
 MLI Seminar participants will have the opportunity to learn about their leadership skills through the **AJIL®** assessment and receive one-to-one coaching.

MLI Team

A cross-disciplinary team of leading local government practitioners and experts in executive coaching and leadership development create and present the program:

- David E. Morrison, M.D.
- Daven Morrison, M.D.
- David M. Limardi, Limardi Consulting LLC, MPA, ICMA-CM
- Robert Kiely, MPA, ICMA-CM
- Dawn S. Peters, MPA

Logistics

Each program is limited to 40 participants to ensure time for one-on-one individualized coaching as well as small group and all-participant events. Tuition for the entire 4.5-day Institute is \$3,400 which includes course materials, daily continental breakfast and lunch for four days. Organizations that send 4-6 participants are eligible for tuition discounts (\$3,000/participant). We ask that no more than 6 people per organization attend the same Institute. Payment must be made by July 31, 2026. Payments not received by that date will result in forfeited seat(s).

The Institute will be held **November 2-6, 2026** at Northern Illinois University's Naperville campus, 1120 East Diehl Road, Naperville, IL.

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SENIOR ADVISOR COLUMN

MAUREEN A. MURPHY

I am profoundly humbled to be appointed to the Senior Advisor position. It is the highlight of my retirement and a wonderful way to give back to the profession that has given me so much. Thank you!

Over the course of my more than 35-year career, I have worked throughout Wisconsin serving as village administrator for Mount Pleasant and for Slinger, county administrator for Door County, assistant administrator/clerk for the City of Mequon, department head in Washington County and executive staff in Milwaukee County as well as a management intern for the Village of Whitefish Bay and Milwaukee County Parks.

Many of you know that I love quotes. My weekly memos always began with one. Here are a couple of my favorites:

Service is what life is all about – Marian Wright Edelman

My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together – Desmond Tutu

Try to be a rainbow in someone’s cloud – Maya Angelou

Civility means a great deal more than just being nice to one another - PM Forni

Success consists of going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm – Winston Churchill

Throughout my career, I have never lost my enthusiasm for government service. Yet, like many of you, my service has been a study in contrast. There are things about me that you may not know. I have had the pleasure of being part of the team that brought billions of dollars in development with the Microsoft Campus in Mount Pleasant. Yet, I have also been in transition.

I am a lifelong member of the International City/County Management Association as well as a founding member of the American Association of Municipal Executives. I served as president of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, but never on the WCMA board. Half of my career has been working in counties and half has been in cities and villages.

The one constant throughout my thirty plus years is the deep network of friends and colleagues that I have met along the way. They have kept me sane and kept me in this wonderful profession. Simply stated, I would not be here without them. Like my network has done for me, I will do for you. I want you to know that I have your back and I am here for you. Please reach out to me with whatever you need.

One final quote, one of my most favorite is “you never regret being kind.” Think about it. We regret anger, envy, and hate, but never kindness.

In my personal life, I have been married for 36 years and have a son who works for the City of Chicago as a planner. We also have an eighteen-pound terrier mix who runs our lives and would not have it any other way.

Please feel free to reach out to me by email at:

Maureen.WCMA@gmail.com

or by phone: 262-685-1922.

I am always happy to help!

MAUREEN A. MURPHY



Government localities are high value targets for cybercriminals, compromising the privacy of thousands every year. Unified endpoint security through the SentinelOne Platform, with access to MDR services, empowers teams to autonomously protect and secure campuses - physical and digital - against the most sophisticated threats. SentinelOne has partnered with CESA 7 to provide Wisconsin government localities with best of breed EDR and MDR, as well as other security solutions, at a more affordable cost.



SentinelOne Bundle for Wisconsin Government:

Singularity Complete

- ✓ EDR with autonomous response actions (Kill, Quarantine, Remediate, Rollback)
- ✓ Firewall Control
- ✓ Device Control (USB/Bluetooth)
- ✓ Remote Shell
- ✓ 14 Day Endpoint Retention
- ✓ Zero Day & emerging threat detection
- ✓ Purple AI Assistant
- ✓ XDR Integration for SI SIEM

Singularity Network Discovery

- ✓ Live Asset Inventory Discovery on Network
- ✓ Device Isolation
- ✓ SI Agent Deployment to unmanaged devices
- ✓ App Vulnerability Mgmt

Support & Training

- ✓ Enterprise Support: 24x7x365 phone and ticket support
- ✓ Access to webinars self-paced and group training

Vigilance MDR

- ✓ Access to 24x7 SOC at SentinelOne
- ✓ Alert Monitoring, Triaging & Remediation
- ✓ Monthly Reporting & Live Metrics

Implementation & Onboarding

- ✓ White-glove implementation services through CESA 7 team

Key Features Of The SentinelOne Platform:

- + **Endpoint Detection & Response (EDR)**
For laptops, on-prem servers, cloud workloads (Windows, MacOS & Linux)
- + **Network Discovery**
Asset Discovery + Control
Vulnerability Management
- + **24/7 Managed Detection & Response (MDR)**
Monitoring of alerts with remediation
- + **Other Add-On SKUs**
Purple AI, Identity, AI SIEM, etc pricing available upon request

CESA Discounted Pricing:
SentinelOne Complete,
Network Discovery and MDR

+ \$26.75 per Workstation License/Year
+ \$39 per Server License/Year

* Pro-rated to existing July 2025 - Jan 2029 agreement (annual billing)

Please Contact Brad Rodgers (brodgers@cesa7.org) for More Information.

CESA 7, 595 Baeten Road, Green Bay, WI 54304

continued on next page



SentinelOne has also put together CESA 7 statewide pricing for all security solutions available within the SentinelOne platform. This allows government entities to put together custom bundles or add solutions at any time during the length of the agreement term.

ENDPOINT

Purple AI SOC Analyst

- ✓ Upgrade to Athena AI for automated remediation and additional features

Mobile Threat Defense (MTD)

- ✓ Threat detection & response for iOS and Android devices

Extended Endpoint Retention

- ✓ Extend retention past 14 days to 30, 90, 180, 365 days or more

IDENTITY

Singularity Identity

- ✓ Identity Threat Detection & Response (ITDR) enabled from S1 EDR agent
- ✓ Cached Credential Protection

Singularity Identity for IDPs

- ✓ Active Directory attack detection & response for domain controllers and application servers
- ✓ Dark Web Credential Detection & Response

Singularity Identity Posture Mgmt

- ✓ Vulnerability and misconfiguration monitoring of Active Directory and Entra ID

CLOUD

Cloud Workload Security (CWS)

- ✓ Real-time, AI powered threat protection for VMs & containers in public clouds

Cloud Native Application Protection (CNAPP)

- ✓ Autonomous threat monitoring, vulnerability management, analysis and remediation of cloud environments (agentless)

SIEM

Singularity Data Lake

- ✓ Cost-effective 3rd party log ingestion
- ✓ Per GB with 30, 90, 180 or +365 day retention

AI SIEM

- ✓ 3rd party log ingestion with detection library, Purple AI and Hyperautomation (next-gen SOAR) with over 200+ out-of-the-box workflows and playbooks

SERVICES

WatchTower Threat Hunting

- ✓ Managed threat hunting and response for newly emerging threats

Digital Forensics & Investigation (DFIR)

- ✓ Bucket of hours for IR, forensics and proactive services (training, health checks, tabletop exercises)

Singularity MDR (MXDR)

- ✓ MDR for 3rd party log sources in AI SIEM, Singularity Identity + Managed Threat Hunting

Please Contact Brad Rodgers (brodgers@cesa7.org) for More Information.

CESA 7, 595 Baeten Road, Green Bay, WI 54304

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Shining the Light on “Shadow AI”

by Andrew G. Taylor, St. Training & Development Specialist, Cities and Villages Mutual Insurance Company

Municipal employees are currently using AI, whether your organization authorizes its use or not. Artificial intelligence is ubiquitous and can be found in nearly every software application, internet search, and connected device. AI’s impact and reach have moved so quickly that it is hard for municipal leadership to keep up with these changes and the risk they create.

“Shadow AI” is the use of AI in an unauthorized, unregulated, or unapproved capacity. Your municipal staff is likely unaware that using an AI tool without authorization or the consideration of your IT team creates liability and data handling concerns. When employees are using non-enterprise (e.g., “Free”) AI applications like ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot, they are likely sharing confidential or protected information.

Fortunately, leaders can implement solutions to protect your municipalities from the risk of “Shadow AI” and unauthorized use. More broadly and much like cybersecurity, it is only with the clear cooperation of municipal leadership and employees, in-house or contracted IT, your insurance company, and outside experts to keep your municipality safe.

Consider the following steps to protect your municipality:

- 1) Talk AI all the time: Review AI usage with current staff, new hires, and elected officials to help them understand the risks and rewards of relying on AI. Employees often struggle to understand the difference between a “web” and an “enterprise” usage of AI and may not understand that they are creating risk.
- 2) Understand the AI use case: Leaders must discuss AI use with staff and see if there are safe and approved ways to automate and speed up work. AI is very effective at drafting simple messages, checking grammar, analyzing data sets, etc., and those tasks can likely be approved with the right policy and training. Using AI to do more complicated work that requires human oversight increases the risk that sensitive or proprietary information is being shared online.
- 3) Provide the policy and training: Leaders should institute an AI policy that outlines the safe use, attribution, and vetting of information. Don’t assume employees understand AI or are using it correctly. For example, many AI tools provide faulty or incorrect information. If an employee is not aware that an AI tool can be wrong, they may take their responsibility to vet the information lightly.



4) Partner with IT & an insurance company: Leaders should connect with IT and your insurance company to ensure compliance and access to the right resources. Your contracted or in-house IT team can handle most of this. Your insurance company should be able to provide you with model policies, IT support, and risk management solutions. Much like cybersecurity relating to social engineering, ransomware, phishing, and other cyber-attacks, it is difficult to go it alone. Lean on the expertise and support of your partners.

5) Secure enterprise AI solutions: If you find that AI is a tool that is making a positive impact on your organization, consider securing enterprise level solutions. Paying for AI, even if it’s not the preferred tool of every employee, is generally a much safer choice than permitting people to utilize free AI software.

6) Consider citations and attributions: A growing area of concern with AI is how to cite or attribute new information. It is difficult for an employee to understand why citing information is important. Explore “the line” between AI original thought and AI support.

The “shadow” use of AI demonstrates what happens when risk outpaces management. Like social media before it, AI is being adopted within municipalities before leadership has an opportunity to evaluate the risk and make good decisions. Work with your staff to analyze your cyber risks and challenges. It does not take long for a cyber breach or AI mishap to cost your municipality tens of thousands of dollars, and your leadership makes all the difference.

Cities & Villages Mutual Insurance Co. (CVMIC) is a member-owned insurance company providing Wisconsin municipalities with high-quality, stable, affordable insurance and a robust partnership of risk management services. Check out cvmic.com to learn more.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Fighting Accounting Fraud: Uncover, Prevent, Protect

By Nathan Kalepp, CPA, CFE, Principal, Bauman Associates, Ltd.

Fraud in organizations—whether public, private, or non-profit—remains a persistent and costly issue. According to the 2024 Report to the Nations from the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE), the typical organization loses about 5% of annual revenue to fraud. The median loss is \$145,000, with many cases lasting over a year before detection. The consequences are severe, not just financially but also in terms of public trust and organizational integrity.

The Scope of Fraud

Fraud can strike any entity, but some industries suffer greater median losses. Government organizations, for instance, show median losses of \$200,000. In ACFE’s study of 170 government cases, the most common schemes were corruption (52%), billing fraud (24%), cash larceny (15%), and expense reimbursement fraud (15%).

- Corruption often involves bribery or conflicts of interest.
- Billing schemes include fictitious or inflated invoices.
- Cash larceny occurs when payments are stolen after being recorded.
- Expense reimbursement fraud involves inflated or fictitious claims.

Fraud is most often detected via tips (43%), followed by management review (13%), and accident (5%). Still, organizations often hesitate to pursue criminal charges due to cost, fear of reputational damage, or weak evidence.

Recognizing Red Flags

Most fraud perpetrators display warning signs: living beyond their means (39%), financial distress (25%), or unusually close vendor relationships (20%). While not conclusive, these indicators warrant further vigilance.

Why Audits Aren’t Enough

It is a misconception that external audits will catch fraud. Audits focus on verifying the accuracy of financial statements, not investigating every fraudulent scheme. Only about 3% of fraud is uncovered this way. Boards and leaders must supplement audits with intentional anti-fraud efforts.

Proactive Organizational Defenses

Organizations can reduce risks through a variety of steps.

- Fraud risk assessments help identify vulnerabilities, gaps in internal controls, and processes most at risk. Involving staff at all levels helps strengthen accountability.
- Training and awareness programs are critical. A strong tone at the top—demonstrated integrity, reinforced expectations, and open discussions of ethics—can dramatically lower risks.
- Whistleblower and ethics programs encourage employees to report concerns anonymously without fear of retaliation. With



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tips being the primary method of detection, these systems are invaluable.

- Fraud detection tools such as software for tracking duplicate payments, missing approvals, or unusual spending patterns help spot anomalies. Even simple practices, like tracking check sequences, can expose manipulation.

The Role of Internal Controls

Well-designed internal controls form the backbone of prevention.

- Segregation of Duties: No single individual should handle all aspects of a transaction. For example, staff who handle cash should also not reconcile accounts, and vendor list management should be separate from payment processing.
- Authorization and Approval Controls: Require multiple signatures for larger disbursements and use audit trails within procurement systems. Oversight builds accountability and makes suspicious behavior harder to conceal.
- Budgetary Controls: Monitor actual expenses against approved budgets and investigate variances. Budgets are only effective when thoughtfully prepared, not constantly amended, and regularly reviewed.
- Timely Reconciliations: Independent reviews of bank statements each month can quickly reveal errors or fraud. Too often, reconciliations occur only annually or not at all, leaving gaps in oversight.
- Physical and IT Controls: Limit access to sensitive financial systems and materials. Checks, cash, and accounting records should never be left exposed, and permissions should be restricted to job-specific responsibilities.

Areas of High Risk

Cash handling and disbursement processes demand extra scrutiny, as they present the most immediate opportunities for fraud. From vendor payments to petty cash, regular oversight and segregation of duties are essential to minimizing risk.

Closing Thoughts

Fraud is more than a financial problem, erodes public trust, weakens employee morale, and can permanently damage an institution’s reputation. By understanding how schemes occur, recognizing warning signs, and strengthening internal controls, organizations can greatly reduce exposure. Strong leadership, proactive oversight, and a culture of accountability remain the most powerful tools in fighting fraud.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Getting in Sync: Funding Cycles and Capital Planning for Smarter Municipal Projects

By Andrew Kurtz, Vierbicher

Navigating the complexities of municipal finance is becoming increasingly essential for local governments in Wisconsin, particularly as state-imposed levy limits make it harder to rely solely on general funds. Successfully moving projects from concept to construction now hinges on securing external funding—grants, state programs, and federal dollars—by identifying the right projects, confirming eligibility, and aligning closely with funding cycles to maximize opportunities.

The Value of Capital Planning

A well-crafted Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is more than an infrastructure wish list—it’s a vital strategy tool that helps municipalities proactively align their needs with a range of funding opportunities. An effective CIP will outline both short- and long-term priorities, project timelines, estimated costs, and potential funding sources. This structure not only increases transparency with stakeholders but also helps communities prepare for rapidly changing application windows, ensuring that municipalities are ready to act when funding opportunities arise, rather than scrambling at the last minute.

Understanding Eligibility and Project Fit

Eligibility for funding varies widely depending on the program and its goals—some focus on economic development, others on environmental objectives, equity, or resilience. For example, road reconstruction, stormwater upgrades, and broadband expansion often each fall under different program guidelines. Understanding these distinctions allows communities to tailor their projects to match program criteria, potentially increasing the odds of funding approval. A strong CIP clarifies upcoming project types so staff can pair them with the most appropriate funding sources well in advance of application deadlines.

Mastering the Funding Calendar

One often-overlooked aspect of external funding is understanding the rhythm of each source’s funding cycle, whether it’s annual, biannual, ongoing, or a one-time opportunity. For instance, a large-scale street and utility reconstruction project scheduled for Fiscal Year 2027 will require municipalities to begin funding applications as early as Fall 2025. This involves submitting applications to the Wisconsin DOT Local Roads Improvement Program, entering DNR loan programs, applying for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and following up with additional DNR applications—all on a specific schedule. Missing any of these crucial deadlines could delay an entire project by a year or more. Thus, maintaining a detailed funding calendar tied to the CIP gives communities a critical advantage, allowing for better resource planning and managing expectations.

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Federal programs, such as those backed by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, may have shorter, more competitive application timelines, while programs like CDBG may vary by region. Understanding and synchronizing these cycles with the target fiscal year for project initiation helps ensure successful project delivery and mitigates the risk of last-minute rushes.

Stacking and Sequencing Funding Sources

Many successful municipalities use a “stacked funding” approach, combining local, state, and federal resources to fully fund major or expensive projects. This might involve leveraging local bonding in tandem with state grants, federal loans, and utility contributions. However, this is only effective with careful sequencing, as some grants require a local match, others prohibit overlap with specific funding types, and most have strict timelines.

For example, a typical sequence could start with a CDBG Planning Grant for downtown revitalization, then pursuing WisDOT Transportation Alternatives Program funds for pedestrian improvements, and finally seeking DNR Revolving Loan Funds for utility work. Each grant and loan requires precise phasing and careful alignment of project milestones. The CIP, complemented by a thorough understanding of funding cycles and eligibility rules, becomes the central roadmap for pulling together this financial puzzle.

Conclusion

With fiscal pressures rising, Wisconsin communities must be strategic rather than reactive to ensure vital infrastructure and development projects receive funding. Proactive capital planning, early and accurate assessment of project eligibility, and diligent tracking of funding cycles can greatly improve the chance of securing resources. Leaders who take this approach will not only boost their odds of receiving necessary funds but also ensure efficient, predictable, and sustainable completion of critical community needs like roads, water systems, and parks.

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SENIOR ADVISORS: A RESOURCE FOR ALL MEMBERS OF WCMA

The Senior Advisors are a tremendous resource for members. Not only are they available for MITs, but also for guidance on less significant issues. As one member noted, "Senior Advisors are not just for the MITs, but also for new and seasoned managers. Sometimes it helps to have somebody to call upon when you are facing a challenging situation or you need to bounce an idea off of somebody. They [Senior Advisors] probably have faced a similar situation during their career." Some of the issues that Seniors Advisors can assist members with include:

- Within two weeks' receipt of notice of appointment, make contact with a new manager, assistant, or chief administrator. Contact members who are in transition within five days of learning of this development to assure the member of continued WCMA support.
- Provide confidential counseling to all members on personal and professional issues when requested by the member. This includes career development and resume review.
- Offer support in a private manner directly to members who may be experiencing problems with their elected officials, staff, or community.

If you or someone you know are having some personal or professional issues, contact:

Dianne Robertson	Email: probertson1@wi.rr.com	Phone: 414-333-6120
Linda Kutchenriter	Email: linda.wcma@gmail.com	Phone: 920-410-4073
Ray Anderson	Email: randerson@norwaymi.com	Phone: 906-282-3503
Maureen Murphy	Email: maureen.wcma@gmail.com	Phone: 262-685-1922

All discussions are confidential.

