

From Vision to Impact: The Professional Local Government Manager's Journey

WCMA Winter Conference
February 25–27, 2026

Schedule

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Noon – 5:00 p.m.

Registration Open **Atrium Lobby**

Noon – 2:45 p.m.

WCMA Board Meeting **KM Hutchinson**

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Exhibitor set-up **Leander Choate**

3:00 – 4:15 p.m.

Pre-Conference Session:
*From Me to We: Developing the
Behaviors of an Ideal Team Player*
John Lynch/Lefevre/Dixie

5:00 – 5:30 p.m.

First Time Attendee Meet & Greet
Cocktails **Leander Choate/Paul L**

6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Dinner **Leander Choate/Paul L**

7:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Welcome Reception and Karaoke
with Sponsors **Leander Choate/Paul L**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

7:30 – 8:45 a.m.

Breakfast **Paul L**

8:45 – 9:00 a.m.

Welcome/Intros
Paul L

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Opening Keynote:
*Revolutionary Leader: How to Lead
Authentically in a World that Sets You
Up to Follow* by Shereen Thor
Paul L



Opening Keynote Sponsor:  **EHLERS**
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10:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Break with Exhibitors **Leander Choate**

10:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Career Counseling **Thistle**

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1: *Strategic Resilience: The
Importance of Long-Term Financial
Planning for Local Governments*
B.F. Carter/Anna M./Evelyn

Session 2: *Navigating the Politics
of Professional Management*
John Lynch/Lefevre/Dixie

11:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch, WCMA Business Meeting
& ICMA Update **Paul L**

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Session 1: *Beyond "How Can
I Help?": Elevating the Customer
Experience in Municipal Services*
B.F. Carter/Anna M./Evelyn

Session 2: *Total Rewards in Public
Sector - Do You Have the Right
Incentive Model for a Mixed
Generation Workforce?*
John Lynch/Lefevre/Dixie

3:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Break with Exhibitors **Leander Choate**

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1: *Round-table Discussions
for Administrators*
B.F. Carter/Anna M./Evelyn

Session 2: *Speed Coaching*
John Lynch/Lefevre/Dixie

5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

5K Walk/Run **Hotel Lobby**

6:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Dinner on Your Own

Downtown Oshkosh

8:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Social **Fletch's Local Tap House
& The Varsity Club**

Social Sponsor:  **LEAGUE
INSURANCE**

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

Breakfast **Paul L**

8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

LWM/County Legislative Update
Paul L

9:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Break **Paul L**

9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

*Beyond Right and Wrong: Decisions,
Dilemmas, and Dialogue* **Paul L**

10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Break **Paul L**

11:00 a.m. – Noon

Closing Keynote:
*The Strategic
Pause: From Constant
Crisis to Calculated
Impact*
by Seth Winterhalter
Paul L



Closing Keynote Sponsor:  **LEAGUE
INSURANCE**

Two Tracks for Concurrent Sessions:
Track 1 – Governance & Operational Excellence
Track 2 – Leadership in Action

Session Information

Wednesday, February 25

3:00 – 4:15 p.m.

From Me to We: Developing the Behaviors of an Ideal Team Player **John Lynch/Lefevre/Dixie**

Being part of a great team starts with you. This session is designed for individuals who want to enhance their contribution to any team—regardless of title, role, or team structure. Based on Patrick Lencioni's the Five Behaviors model, you will learn the core behaviors of high-performing teams—Trust, Conflict, Commitment, Accountability, and Results—and explore how these behaviors drive team success.

Through interactive discussions and practical tools, participants will gain insights into how their personal behaviors, mindsets, and communication habits impact team dynamics and outcomes. This session encourages individuals to identify personal strengths and blind spots, build emotional intelligence, and become more intentional, accountable, and collaborative teammates.

Speaker

Sarah Schillerstrom, CEO, SRSD Consulting LLC

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas

4 (Staff Effectiveness); 13 (Human Resource Management & Workforce Engagement); 14 (Communication & Information Sharing)

Thursday, February 26

8:45 – 9:00 a.m.

Welcome and Introductions

Paul L

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Opening Keynote: Revolutionary Leader: How to Lead Authentically in a World that Sets You Up to Follow **Paul L**

by Shereen Thor

The #1 regret of dying is, "I wish I had the courage to live a life true to myself rather than the one other people expected of me." There are also around 120,000 preventable deaths a year due to work-related stress in America. People aren't just dying from overwork, they're dying because they are not sharing their authentic gifts, and the cost to our well-being is dire.

Join Shereen Thor on a journey to uncover the secrets of workplace happiness, drawing on Yale's renowned techniques. Embrace a leadership mindset towards well-being and discover how investing in happiness can benefit both individuals and organizations. Perfect for professionals and leaders feeling the weight of burnout, this talk offers practical strategies for boosting morale and productivity while prioritizing personal well-being.

Addresses ICMA Practice Area

5 (Personal Resiliency & Development)

Opening Keynote Sponsor: 

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1: Strategic Resilience: The Importance of Long-Term Financial Planning for Local Governments – Track #1 **B.F. Carter/Anna M./Evelyn**

In an era characterized by rapid technological change, evolving demographics, volatile economic cycles, and rapid changes occurring in Madison and Washington DC, local governments in Wisconsin are challenged more than ever to steward public resources with foresight and responsibility.

This presentation aims to equip local government leaders with the tools, knowledge, case studies, and motivation necessary to proactively address fiscal sustainability in light of these many challenges through comprehensive long-term financial planning.

Speakers

Brandon Scruggs, Manager, Baker Tilly Advisory Group
Chris Strom, Consulting Manager, Baker Tilly Advisory Group

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas

7 (Strategic Planning); 12 (Financial Management and Budgeting)

Session 2: Navigating the Politics of Professional Management – Track #2 **John Lynch/Lefevre/Dixie**

It is a challenge for professional managers/administrators to uphold the core tenets of the profession during an era of intense political division. The ICMA Code of Ethics, for example, states that members must "Serve the best interests of all community members." It also states members must "Refrain from all political activities which undermine public confidence in professional administrators." The nationalization of local issues and the rise of partisan participation in local non-partisan elections has caused some to question the ability of a municipal executive to serve all community members and has blurred the line between politics and governing.

In this session we will explore the distinction between governing and politics and give municipal executives practical tools to navigate the growing pressure of local partisan politics. The presenter will share survey data, research insights, and real-world examples of how managers can operate in this challenging space.

Speaker

Dr. Michael Ford, Director of the Wisconsin Institute for Citizenship and Civil Dialogue and Professor of Public Administration at UW Oshkosh

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas

1 (Personal & Professional Integrity); 6 (Strategic Leadership); 14 (Communication & Information Sharing)

11:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch, WCMA Business Meeting & ICMA Update

Paul L

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1: *Beyond “How Can I Help?”: Elevating the Customer Experience in Municipal Services – Track #1*

B.F. Carter/Anna M./Evelyn

Local government service is often most successful when residents hardly notice it, because their needs are met proactively, questions are answered before they're asked, and outdated requirements are thoughtfully removed or simplified. When interaction is required, outstanding service means delivering complete, accurate information through multiple channels in clear, plain language, paired with 24/7 digital and in-person self-service access when it's needed. This session explores elevated service delivery, Lean process improvement, and the power of anticipatory design, eliminating unnecessary steps, reducing process delays, and ensuring residents experience one stop or location for answers and next steps, while helping municipal teams move beyond the mindset of, "That's how we've always done it."

Speaker

Rebecca Grill, City Manager, City of Oshkosh

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas

2 (Community Engagement); 4 (Staff Effectiveness); 9 (Community & Resident Service); 10 (Service Delivery)

Session 2: *Total Rewards in Public Sector - Do You Have the Right Incentive Model for a Mixed Generation Workforce? – Track #2* **John Lynch/Lefevre/Dixie**

This session will take a look at total rewards for public sector and the mix between pay and benefits. The session will challenge public sector leaders to re-evaluate existing practices and total rewards. Are current practices aligned with strategic employee attraction and retention goals? Do those practices meet the needs of all employees or just some?

Speakers

Sandra Matz, Consultant, Employee Benefits, Cottingham & Butler

Shanon Swaney, Consultant, Total Rewards, Cottingham & Butler

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas

4 (Staff Effectiveness); 13 (Human Resources Management and Workforce Engagement)

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1: *Municipalities and Counties Large or Small Round Table Discussions – Track #1*

B.F. Carter/Anna M./Evelyn

Join us for an interactive discussion in round tables designed to share information among your peers and help you make connections with Administrators in like-sized communities. There will be three tables based on population size of your community; small, medium and large. Each table will have questions intended to spark discussion and share information. The session will have host Administrators to help facilitate discussions.

Round Table Facilitators

Travis Coenen, Village Administrator, Village of Wrightstown

Josh Finch, City Administrator, City of Waupaca

Matt Heiser, Village Administrator, Village of Pewaukee

Adam Ruechel, Public Finance Specialist, Baird

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas

7 (Strategic Planning); 12 (Financial Management & Budgeting); 13 (Human Resources Management & Workforce Engagement); 14 (Communication & Information Sharing)

Session 2: *Speed Coaching – Track #2*

John Lynch/Lefevre/Dixie

You've heard about "speed dating," but how about "Speed Coaching?" This is an opportunity for aspiring leaders who desire to move up in local government (aka, "Quarterbacks") to hook up with Senior Managers (aka "Coaches") who are willing to share their experience, insight, and advice on how to make it in local government. QBs and Coaches will be paired up for a series of intensive 10-15-minute one on one sessions. Come with a playful spirit. This will be a high-energy, low-risk way to get acquainted... bring plenty of business cards. Advance registration will be required. We'll need both Quarterbacks and Coaches to make this a success, so be sure to sign up!

Facilitator

Mark Rohloff, McMahon Associates

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas

1 (Personal & Professional Integrity); 5 (Personal Resiliency & Development).

Friday, February 27

8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

A League of WI Municipalities and WI Counties Association Legislative Update **Paul L**

This session will provide attendees insight into the impact of the recent statewide legislation on local government.

Presenters

Jerry Deschane, Executive Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities

Mark D. O'Connell, CEO and President, Wisconsin Counties Association

9:45– 10:45 a.m.

Beyond Right and Wrong: Decisions, Dilemmas, and Dialogue **Paul L**

Ethics are often nuanced and complex, so this interactive session incorporates a number of real-life case scenarios, encouraging open discussion, providing opportunities for professionals to analyze different perspectives, and focusing on the decision-making process behind ethical dilemmas. After a summary of ICMA and WCMA modifications to the ethics enforcement procedures, this session will dive into real life examples of ethical issues in different situations. Rather than simply stating what is "right" or "wrong," allowing WCMA members to grapple with complex situations and consider the potential consequences of actions; this approach promotes critical thinking and ethical reasoning, making ethics relevant and applicable to our day-to-day operations and management approach.

Speakers

Jessica Cowles, ICMA

WCMA Ethics Committee Representatives

11:00 a.m. – Noon

Closing Keynote: The Strategic Pause: From Constant Crisis to Calculated Impact by Seth Winterhalter

Paul L

In municipal leadership, there is no "off switch." Emergency calls at 2 AM, weekend community events, and late-night council meetings aren't just part of the job—they are the job. Yet in this always-on environment, many city managers find themselves trapped in a cycle of diminishing returns, where constant availability masks declining effectiveness.

In this compelling keynote, Seth Winterhalter moves beyond acknowledging the challenges to implementing practical solutions. Drawing from his transition from pastoral ministry to municipal leadership consulting, Seth reveals how strategic pauses—from daily rituals to extended sabbaticals—can transform both professional impact and personal fulfillment.

Through powerful storytelling and evidence-based insights, participants will discover why the path to peak performance isn't found in pushing harder, but in pausing strategically. Learn how to recognize the warning signs of burnout, implement sustainable boundaries, and leverage different types of rest for maximum impact. Recommended for city managers, department heads, and municipal leaders who are ready to move from surviving to thriving. This session provides a practical framework for sustainable leadership in an always-on world.

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas

5 (Personal Resilience & Development); 6 (Strategic Leadership)

Closing Keynote Sponsor: 



Social Activities
Wednesday, February 25

Sponsor: 

5:00 – 5:30 p.m. – **First Time Attendee Meet & Greet**

5:30 p.m. – **Cocktails**

6:00 – 7:00 p.m. – **Dinner**

7:00 – **Welcome Reception and Karaoke with our**

Sponsors

Join us for a fun and energetic Welcome Reception where you can mix and mingle with fellow attendees and, most importantly, connect with our valued Sponsors. Warm up your pipes with some liquid courage, then grab the mic! This isn't just a networking reception, it's a karaoke showdown! It's the perfect, relaxed environment to network, learn about the latest industry offerings, and enjoy some memorable (and maybe slightly off-key) performances.

Thursday, February 26

Sponsor: 

5:00 p.m. – **5K Walk/Run**

6:00 – 8:30 p.m. – **Dinner on your own**

Join your colleagues for local cuisine! Check out downtown Oshkosh and enjoy everything it has to offer. Discover Oshkosh will provide guides to local restaurants.

8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Social at Fletch's Local Tap House & The Varsity Club

After dinner downtown, join us for an evening of great conversation and fun at Fletch's Local Tap House and The Varsity Club (566 & 570 North Main Street, Oshkosh). Connected by an interior door, this venue offers two distinct, yet perfectly complementary, experiences to suit your mood: The Varsity Club provides a relaxed, lively atmosphere perfect for catching Thursday night sports, while Fletch's offers an ideal spot to commiserate, unwind after a day of sessions, and enjoy some friendly competition with dart boards available. It's the perfect chance to connect with peers, share ideas, and socialize. Don't miss out on this opportunity to make new friends and enjoy the vibrant downtown Oshkosh scene!



Thank you sponsors!

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Conference Committee

Chair - Travis Coenen, Village of Wrightstown, Village Administrator
Gabe Altenbernd, Village of Belleville, Village Administrator
Brandon Bledsoe, Village of Marshall, Village Administrator
Inga Cushman, Village of Cottage Grove, Assistant Village Manager/Human Resource Manager
Michael Duerkop, MSA Professional Services
David Erdman, Managing Director, Baker Tilly
Josh Finch, City of Waupaca, City Administrator
Lauren Freeman, Village of Waunakee, Deputy Administrator
Matt Heiser, Village Administrator, Village of Pewaukee
Brandon Hennes, City of Omro, City Administrator/Treasurer
Benjamin Krumenauer, Village of Bellevue, Village Administrator
Rick Niemeier, City of Onalaska, City Administrator
Andy Pederson, Village of Bayside, Village Manager
Cory Poris Plasch, President, CP2 Consulting
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