

Wisconsin City/County Management Association

Is it important to your council that you're a member of WCMA? If you're like me, your council or board may not fully understand your involvement with WCMA. They may know it's in your contract because "everyone does it," or they may have seen a press release or social media post noting your board service if applicable. But do they truly understand why your membership in a professional management organization matters?

Recently, Caz Muske of the City of Clintonville (go Truckers) shared a video of a presenter explaining to a council why their next Administrator should be actively engaged in organizations like WCMA and, especially, ICMA. His message was clear: involvement in these organizations reflects a commitment to professional development, better communities, and adherence to the ICMA Code of Ethics.

The ICMA Code—which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2024—sets clear expectations. In short, it affirms that we:

- Believe in local government and the services we provide
- Uphold the highest ethical standards
- Serve the entire community, not individuals or factions
- Offer policy advice based on the best available information
- Remain accountable, non-political, and impartial
- Continually improve our professional capabilities
- Protect the integrity of our role and resist improper influence

In my 28 years in professional public management, I've relied on these tenets countless times to explain why I took—or didn't take—certain actions. If I've "hidden behind" the Code at times, it's because it protects not only us as professionals, but the communities we serve.

I encourage you to take a moment to remind your council or board about your involvement in WCMA and ICMA (if applicable), and to share your why—why these memberships matter to you, to them, and to your community.



Steve Volkert
City Administrator – Hartford, WI
WCMA President



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WHO'S WHO DIRECTORY

Tim Wellnitz has started a new position as the Village Administrator in the Village of Grafton. He previously served as the Town Administrator of the Town of Beloit.

Patrick Brever has been appointed as the new Deputy Village Administrator of Mount Pleasant and will be leaving his role as City Administrator in South Milwaukee.

Padrick Dunn has been appointed as the Village Administrator of Cambellsport. Padrick currently serves as the Village Administrator of Sherwood.

Nicholas Owen has been named as the first County Administrator of Green County. He previously has served as Village Administrator in both Mount Horeb and New Glarus.

JOB MART

Click here for current job openings



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ben Andrews, Village of Sister Bay, Village Administrator
 Katrina Becker, Becker Professional Services, Vice President
 Dyann Benson, Village of Slinger, Asst. Administrator/
 CD Director

Nicole Berzin, Village of Shorewood, Assistant Village
 Manager/HR Manager

Amanda Cyr, Just Appraised

Zach Day, Caselle

Scott Depies, City of New Holstein, City Administrator

Lawrence Dire, City of Brodhead, City Administrator

Kimberly Flom, City of De Pere, City Manager

Michael Ford, Whitburn Center for Governance and
 Policy Research at UW Oshkosh

Ann Freiwald, City of Verona, Assistant City Administrator

Sebastian Fuentes, Samsara

Rebecca Glewen, Trempealeau County, County Administrator
 Cole Hall, Student

James Hanke, CEDA - Community and Economic
 Development Associates, VP-Wisconsin

Kelsey Jenson, Village of New Glarus, Village Administrator

Erik Kass, PTMA Financial Solutions

Kevin Kimmes, Bolton & Menk, Inc.

Alexander Malchow, student

Megan McBride, UW-Madison, Managing Director

Amanda Mohrbacher, Calumet County, Assistant to the
 County Administrator

Betty Novy, Village of Rochester, Village Administrator

Ryan Pafford, City of Kiel, City Administrator

Tiana Regenwether, Ansay & Associates

James Rognstad, Kraus-Anderson Construction Company,
 Director, Project Planning & Development

Tina Ruskey, Dependable Solutions, Inc.

Angela Schultz, City of New Lisbon, City Administrator

Chris Strambowski, raSmith

Shanon Swaney, Cottingham and Butler, HR/Compensation
 Consultant

Kathleen Taylor, Bolton & Menk

Jordan, Veome, Avila Technologies, Inc.

Brett Weeden, PTMA Financial Solutions

Maggie Wilson, Samsara

Jeri Wittmershaus, Village of Bangor, Village Administrator/
 Clerk-Treasurer

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EVENTS

Winter Conference
2/25-27/2026
Oshkosh Marriott Waterfront Hotel & Convention Center

Region 1 Meeting
3/6/2026 – 10 AM
Virtual

Region 5 Meeting
3/9/2026 – 12 PM
Virtual

WCMA Brewer Game
4/1/2026 – 12:50 PM
American Family Field – Milwaukee

Region 3 Meeting
4/9/2026 – 11:30 AM
Bellevue

Region 5 Meeting
4/13/2026 – 12 PM
Virtual

Region 4 In-Person Luncheon
4/16/2026 – 11 AM
Location TBD

Region 5 Meeting
5/11/2026 – 12 PM
Virtual

Region 8 In-Person Social
5/15/2026 – 3:30 PM
East Troy Brewery

Region 4 Meeting
5/19/2026 – 11:30 AM
Virtual

Region 5 Meeting
5/8/2026 – 12 PM
Virtual

Region 2 Meeting
5/21/2026 – After HR Region Meeting
Rib Mountain

WCMA Board Meeting
6/11/2026 – 10 AM
Virtual

Summer Conference
6/24-26/2026
La Crosse Center



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Let's connect
bakertilly.com/industries/state-and-local-government

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2025-26 WCMA BOARD

Executive Committee

President: Steve Volkert, City of Hartford, City Administrator

President Elect: Tyler Burkart, Village of Brown Deer,
Village Manager

Vice President/Treasurer: Inga Cushman, Village of Cottage
Grove, Assistant Village Administrator/Human
Resources Manager

Past President: William Jones, City of Mequon,
City Administrator

Regional Directors

Region 1: Roy Atkinson, City of Altoona, Assistant
City Administrator

Region 2: Scott Kluver, City of Park Falls, City Administrator

Region 3: Josh Finch, City of Waupaca, City Administrator

Region 4: Nate Torres, City of Viroqua, City Administrator

Region 5: Gabe Altenbernd, Village of Belleville,
Village Administrator

Region 6: Steven Kreklow, Village of Germantown,
Village Administrator

Region 7: Mike Hawes, Village of Greendale, Village Manager

Region 8: Travis Wells, Village of Wind Point, Village
Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer

Region 9: Diana Dykstra, Village of Mukwonago,
Village Administrator

County Representative: Lisa Wilson, Sauk County,
County Administrator

CONGRATULATIONS

to WCMA Members Who Received ICMA Distinguished Service Awards at the ICMA Annual Conference

10 Year Service Award

Brandon S. Bledsoe

Drake Daily, MPA

Lance Leonhard, JD

Dave A Solberg, PE

20 Year Service Award

Stephanie Hirsch, MBA

Matthew G. Schuenke

Ken P. Pabich

25 Year Service Award

Jeffrey S. French, CPA

Tammy A. LaBorde, ICMA-CM

Kevin M. Lahner

John J Larson

Aaron Oppenheimer, ICMA-CM

Todd J. Schmidt

35 Year Service Award

Mark Abeles-Allison

40 Year Service Award

Mr. Mark S. Fitzgerald



Maureen Murphy - WCMA/ICMA Senior Advisor Wisconsin Policy Forum - 2025 James R. Ryan Lifetime Achievement Award Winner

The Wisconsin Policy Forum's James R. Ryan Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes individuals in the public sector for exceptional, long-term leadership, innovation, and dedicated service to their communities and the state. It is part of the annual "Salute to Local Government" awards, honoring career achievements in public service or administration. WCMA Senior Advisor, Maureen Murphy was the 2025 winner.



RACHEL'S REFLECTIONS

Hopefully by now, most of you know my face and name, but I wanted to officially share with the membership that as of January 1, 2026, I am the Executive Director of WCMA.

I am grateful for this role and opportunity to work in my home state with such an amazing organization. If

we've had a conversation about my career, you've likely heard me gush about my love for associations and how they bring together passionate people, which in turn fuels me. WCMA has felt like more than that. From the first conference I attended, I felt like I was with "my people."

You are all public servants who show up for your communities day in and day out. You care about what the future of the places you live and work look like, not only today, but tomorrow too. The dedication is palpable in every conversation I have. On the same note of dedication, having Dawn Peters as my mentor for the last two years and continuing to have her on board through the fall is a blessing. I'm truly learning from the best of the best. If you haven't yet signed up to join us in Oshkosh for the 2026 Winter Conference (February 25-27), I hope you'll consider it. Although we can be a loud and boisterous group, these people can also help ground you. Whether you're facing a challenge on the job or at home, you can always find someone in the room who has been through something similar and many more who want to support you.

Often when you feel you're "too busy" to take time for a conference, it's the exact moment you need it. These gatherings help reenergize us and remind us why we entered this profession in the first place. It can be lonely at the top of an organization, so I hope you join us for the camaraderie and the connection that only this group can provide.

Rachel Gorsuch Sorensen, JD, Esq.
WCMA Executive Director



SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS: WHY KEEPING YOUR DIRECTORY INFORMATION UPDATED MATTERS

As senior advisors, one of the most rewarding aspects of our role is helping members in many ways—whether it's answering questions about community challenges, strategic planning, economic development, or career transitions. We also assist communities in creating new manager or administrator positions, welcome new WCMA members and sponsors, and support those navigating career changes.

One of our most important responsibilities is being there for you when you need help the most. Unfortunately, the hardest moments often happen on Friday afternoons, when we receive alerts about a community making a sudden leadership change. The real challenge? We can't reach you!

Too often, we find ourselves unable to connect—no LinkedIn profile, no directory listing, no phone or email. We want to let you know about the benefits available to you, such as access to a list of attorneys and limited reimbursement for legal fees through your WCMA membership. Consulting with legal counsel can help you navigate difficult situations with professionalism and clarity.

If you're in career transition, remember that WCMA will waive your conference fee so you can spend time with your peers. The MICT guide also includes mental health resources, and we want you to know that we're here for confidential support whenever you need it.

Please take a moment to update your PERSONAL contact information in the WCMA Directory. Staying connected ensures you can access all the support and benefits you deserve.

Email Updates to wcma@niu.edu

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

Noon – 2:45 p.m.

WCMA Board Meeting

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Exhibitor set-up

3:00 – 4:15 p.m.

Pre-Conference Session:
From Me to We: Developing the Behaviors of an Ideal Team Player

5:00 – 5:30 p.m.

First Time Attendee Meet & Greet

5:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Cocktails

6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Dinner

7:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Welcome Reception and Karaoke with our Sponsors

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

7:30 – 8:45 a.m.

Breakfast

8:45 – 9:00 a.m.

Welcome/Intros

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



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

Break in Exhibit Hall

10:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Career Counseling

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1: *Strategic Resilience: The Importance of Long-Term Financial Planning for Local Governments*

Session 2: *Navigating the Politics of Professional Management*

11:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch, WCMA Business Meeting & ICMA Update

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Session 1: *Beyond "How Can I Help?": Elevating the Customer Experience in Municipal Services*

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

3:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Break in Exhibit Hall

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1: *Round-table Discussions for Administrators*

Session 2: *Speed Coaching*

5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

5K Walk/Run

6:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Dinner on Your Own

8:00 – 10:00 p.m.

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

Social Sponsor: **LEAGUE INSURANCE**

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

Breakfast

8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

LWM/County Legislative Update

9:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Break

9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Beyond Right and Wrong: Decisions, Dilemmas, and Dialogue

10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m. – Noon

Closing Keynote:

The Strategic From Constant Crisis to Calculated Impact

by Seth Winterhalter



Closing Keynote Sponsor: **LEAGUE INSURANCE**



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Two Tracks for Concurrent Sessions:

Track 1 – Governance & Operational Excellence

Turning Plans into Progress: Managing People, Budgets, and Systems Focus: Day-to-day management, performance metrics, budgeting, procurement, and service delivery optimization.

Track 2 – Leadership in Action

Growing the Next Generation: Mentorship, Ethics, and Legacy Focus: Succession planning, professional development, ethical leadership, and cultivating future local gov managers.

Session Information

Wednesday, February 25

3:00 – 4:15 p.m.

From Me to We: Developing the Behaviors of an Ideal Team Player

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.

Learning Objectives

1. "Learn how Trust, Conflict, Commitment, Accountability, and Results drive high-performing teams.
2. Reflect on behaviors and communication habits that impact team dynamics.
3. Use tools to enhance emotional intelligence, accountability, and teamwork.

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

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



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.

Learning Objectives

Shereen Thor is on a mission to help audiences find happiness by embracing rebellion so that they can fulfill their purpose. After Shereen speaks, you will:

1. Learn to trust your leadership ability.
2. Begin to dream again.
3. Take aligned action in your life.

Sponsor:



Addresses ICMA Practice Area

5 (Personal Resiliency & Development)

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1: Strategic Resilience: The Importance of Long-Term Financial Planning for Local Governments – Track #1

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.

**SAVE THE DATE:
WCMA Summer
Conference!**

LA CROSSE CENTER,
LA CROSSE, WI

Executive Director, Dawn
Peters' Farewell Conference

**JUN
25-27
2026**

continued on next page

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.

Learning Objectives

1. Definition and distinction from annual budgeting
 - a. Core components: revenue forecasting, expenditure planning, debt management, and capital improvement planning
 - b. Integration with strategic plans and policy objectives
2. The Rationale for a Long-Term Perspective
 - a. Changing demographics and population trends
 - b. Infrastructure lifecycle management
 - c. Environmental risks, technological disruption, and economic shifts
3. Tools and Best Practices; Approaches
 - a. Multi-year financial modeling and scenario analysis
 - b. Performance measurement, benchmarking, and transparency practices
 - c. Community engagement in financial planning
 - d. Frameworks for effective policy decision-making

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

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.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the extent of growing partisanship in local non-partisan government.

2. Learn to differentiate between governing and politics.
3. Learn how to use the tools of civil dialogue to bridge political divides.
4. Learn how to apply the policy of institutional neutrality to local government.

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

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

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

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.”

Learning Objectives

1. Assess systematic barriers that create friction points.
2. Identify specific policy or procedural changes that prioritize citizens as customers.
3. Actionable takeaways to create a culture of an elevated customer experience.

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

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?

Learning Objectives

1. Develop an understanding of current pay and benefit trends to be aware of.
2. Develop actionable insights to modernize current total rewards, strategies, and offerings.
3. Challenge traditional compensation and benefits assumptions by examining how legacy systems may unintentionally favor certain employee groups over others.

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

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.

Learning Objectives

1. Learn the strategic planning process of other communities.
2. Learn the hiring practices in other communities.
3. Understand the relationship between staff and Boards/Councils in other communities.
4. Discover financial practices in other communities.
5. Gain knowledge of digital communication practices of other communities.

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

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!

Learning Objectives

1. Acquire practical advice.
2. Expand your professional network.
3. Connect aspiring leaders and senior managers.

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

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

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.

1. The Importance of the ICMA Code of Ethics and Most Common Violations
2. Modifications to the Enforcement Procedures and New Workflow Chart
3. Ethics Case Studies
 - a. Most Common Every Day Ethical Dilemma (Kahoot App)
 - b. More Complex Situations focused on ICMA Code of Ethics (Small Groups)
4. Guide to Manager Ethical Responsibilities

Learning Objectives

1. Reinforcing a strict adherence to ICMA's Code of Ethics and how enforcement of the Code is critical to the profession.
2. Real-life case studies and scenarios to illustrate ethical challenges.
3. Utilize current events, business cases, and personal anecdotes to illustrate ethical challenges and encourage discussion about how ethical principles apply in practical situations.
4. Emphasize the importance of identifying all parties affected by a decision and analyzing the potential consequences for each stakeholder.

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



Sponsor: LEAGUE INSURANCE

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.

Learning Objectives

1. Recognizing the early warning signs of leadership depletion before they become critical.
2. Understanding the Triangle of Rest: evening, weekend, and extended pauses.
3. Implementing strategic boundaries that protect both personal and professional effectiveness.
4. Creating a customized framework for sustainable leadership impact.

Addresses ICMA Practice Areas

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

Social Activities

Wednesday, February 25

Sponsor: LEAGUE INSURANCE

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

Get ready to kick off the WCMA conference in style! 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

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



FLETCH'S
LOCAL TAP HOUSE

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!

**SAVE THE DATE:
WCMA Summer
Conference!**

LA CROSSE CENTER,
LA CROSSE, WI

**Executive Director, Dawn
Peters' Farewell Conference**





Your team has pushed boundaries, sparked innovation, and made a lasting impact this year. Now it's time to shine a spotlight on that excellence.

Nominate a colleague or program for an **ICMA Local Government Excellence Award** and help recognize the leaders and initiatives shaping the future of local government.

The ICMA Local Government Excellence Awards honor visionaries transforming our communities and setting new standards for leadership and service. Share your story of impact and join the distinguished community of **past award recipients**.

Submit your nomination in any of the following award categories by **March 13**:

Professional Award Categories (individual nominations)

- ★ Career Excellence
- ★ Development of New Talent
- ★ Excellence in Leadership as an Assistant (regardless of title)
- ★ Academic Contributions to the Profession
- ★ Early Career Leadership
- ★ Advocacy for the Profession
- ★ **NEW!** Good Governance

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Program Award Categories

- ★ Community Equity and Inclusion
- ★ Community Health and Safety
- ★ Community Partnerships
- ★ Community Sustainability
- ★ Strategic Leadership and Governance

Award recipients receive **year-round recognition**, including a feature in ICMA's award-winning *Public Management Magazine*. Submitting a nomination ensures that outstanding peers and innovative programs receive the recognition they deserve.

Whether you've launched a groundbreaking initiative, advanced the profession, or helped your community thrive, we want to hear your story—one that can inspire local government professionals everywhere. ✨

Submit Your Nomination Today!

👑 **Submit your nominations by March 13, 2026, to ensure your team's most impactful work is considered for professional recognition.**

Questions? Contact Joyce Lee Brown, ICMA Awards Program Manager, at jlee@icma.org.



Board Nominations

Do you have a colleague who could be a dedicated member of the WCMA Board of Directors? Would you like to serve? Now is the time to nominate qualified candidates for the position of Vice President/Treasurer on the WCMA Executive Board. Any members interested in being considered for the nomination should review the following information and submit a letter of interest **no later than April 15.**

Note that the board meets via Zoom and in person at both winter and summer conferences.

Duties of Vice President/Treasurer

- Attend all executive committee and board meetings
- Provide general assistance to the President & 1st Vice President
- Participate as a vital part of the board leadership
- Carry out special assignments as requested by the board President
- Serve as Treasurer of the organization
- Work with the Executive Director to ensure that appropriate financial reports are made available to the board on a timely basis
- Approve/co-sign financial transactions
- Assist the Executive Director in preparing the annual budget and presenting the budget to the board for approval
- Assume responsibilities of the president in the absence of the board president or president-elect
- Serve on committees as may be assigned by the President

IMPORTANT: Appointment to the Executive Committee is essentially a 3-year term which becomes effective at the end of the June conference. The Vice President/Treasurer becomes President Elect in year two, and then President in year three.

Criteria Being Considered by Nominating Committee

While the by-laws do not specify criteria, aside from the requirement that the nominee be a corporate member of WCMA, we have identified the following factors that we will be considering:

- Geographic (statewide) representation on executive committee
- Municipal and County mix
- Gender diversity
- Proven history of active involvement in WCMA (regional coordinator, committee participation, etc.)

Interest Submittal Requirements

- Submit one-page letter of interest in PDF format to Rachel via email at rgorsuchsorensen@niu.edu
- Due date: April 15
- Letter should express reasons for interest and provide details regarding prior activity in WCMA



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

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WCMA Corporate Sponsor Program Invoice



Company Name: _____

Website: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Consulting Member Name: _____	2nd Consulting Member Name: _____ (Gold & Platinum only)
Email Address: _____	Email Address: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____
3rd Consulting Member Name: _____ (Platinum Only)	4th Consulting Member Name: _____ (Platinum Only)
Email Address: _____	Email Address: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____

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
 NIU Center for Governmental Studies
 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

TRY TO BE A RAINBOW IN SOMEONE'S CLOUD!

by Maureen Murphy, ICMA/WCMA Senior Advisor.

At the annual 2025 ICMA conference in Tampa, fellow senior advisor Dianne Robertson and I attended a member-in-career-transition meeting hosted by our Midwest representative Matt Fulton. Matt is dedicated to improving ICMA's programs for Members-in-Career Transition (MICTs). It was an honor to spend time with this group. There were about 50 MICTs from around the country at the meeting. At any time, the number of ICMA members-in-career-transition can be as high as 100 members. Please also know that the numbers cited do not include non-ICMA, state association only members.

Depending on where you are in your career, you may have experienced a hiccup yourself or it may be early, and you haven't yet. Our profession does not like to talk about that in many communities, we are seen as expendable. When that happens, it is important for our members to know that they have value! During the meeting, participants talked extensively about ways to engage with a member who is in career transition. The answer is simple - JUST DO IT. Having been in career transition myself, please know that it is incredibly lonely. For me, I volunteered at an assisted living facility to have human contact - spent a lot of time in the hospice unit trying to figure out what life is all about. Remember the Desmond Tutu quote, *"My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together."*

Think about what you can do to help a member-in-career-transition. Perhaps coffee, lunch, or an after-hours drink. You may make a friend for life. I know you will feel better about yourself. Maybe this person can then help you when something happens. Kindness is always repaid. WCMA has a MICT guide that you could share too. There are many benefits offered in the guide, including assistance with legal fees, conference registration which is free, and training opportunities as well as a list of good lawyers and mental health resources.



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If it is possible to take your actions one step further, consider offering a temporary position to a member in career transition. Do you have a project that is waiting to be done? Perhaps it is a wage rate analysis or an organization study. With heavy elections expected in Wisconsin in 2026, could you use an extra hand to help the Clerk's office organize the absentee ballots or update the multitude of notices that elections now require? Maybe there's tax payments to process. Or how about helping citizens with the dreaded re-assessment process?

If your time is limited, a phone call or an email works. WCMA has a wonderful membership directory that includes everyone's contact information. While checking the directory, please make sure that your information is up to date. Maya Angelou said it best, *"Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud."*



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Leading in Turbulence

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20
The Changing Role of Mid-Managers

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16
Combating Chronic Organizational Distress

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14
How to Become a Great Coach

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



Learn more at
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ICMA | coaching program

Career Compass No. 120: “How Can I Shape the Future?”

“You can’t ‘manage’ change. The forces of change are too big. However, it’s possible to shape the change as it occurs in order to help create a better future.”

By Dr. Frank Benest | Sep 10, 2025 | ARTICLE

Dear Frank:

I am a police captain overseeing traffic and parking enforcement units in a mid-sized city in the northeast. We’ve been getting a lot of angry complaints from businesspeople and neighborhood groups about people living in RVs parked along a mixed-use area of the city. Complaints involve trash, dumping of human waste, blocked sidewalks, and unsightliness. We have the authority to cite RVs that don’t move their vehicles every 72 hours. I realize that citing RVs and forcing them to relocate just moves the problem to another area of the city.



I’d like to propose a “safe parking” program on public property or in church or business parking lots. I realize that the homelessness problem is driven by larger economic and social forces, and any safe parking program won’t solve the problem. I also know that the police department can’t adequately address the challenge.

We do have a few shelters in the city operated by non-profits or faith-based groups and some new subsidized affordable housing projects. These efforts are totally inadequate given the scope of the problem. Moreover, there is a lot of fear on the part of the unhoused as well as other community members.

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There does not seem to be a good solution to create a better future for all. I feel for the RV folks who need the housing and for the business and community people who complain. It seems like a growing and overwhelming problem. Given my limited authority, I feel somewhat helpless. I want to do something but don't know what. What do I do?

Response

Yes, your assessment is correct. The unhoused challenge is part of larger social and economic forces that you cannot address. And your values compel you do something positive even though a safe parking program will undoubtedly be insufficient in solving the homelessness challenge. Yet, you must act. You are not helpless. As John Wooden famously stated, "Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do."

Three Reactions to Change

It is often suggested that leaders need to manage change. Peter Drucker, the great management thinker of the 20th century, stated that it is impossible to "manage" change. The mega-forces creating change are too big to manage.

In the face of a changing future, leaders have three options:

1. Shape the change

This is the best option. You see the change as it emerges and you do your best with others to *embrace* or acknowledge the change and *shape* it for the better.

2. Passively accept the change

This is the mindset of accepting whatever may occur. You feel helpless. It is not a good place to be.

3. Resist the change

This attitude is impossible. You cannot resist the change over time. The forces of change are too big. (It was like me as a young department head trying to resist the use of email in the early 1990s.)

So, the question is how to actively shape the change as it occurs and help create something positive with others.

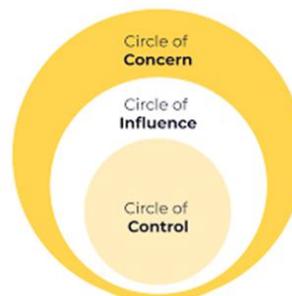
Three Spheres

Stephen Covey in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (1989)* identified three spheres of involvement:

Circle of control: You can make things happen and deliver upon your commitments.

Circle of influence: You can guide and shape outcomes but only indirectly and usually only partially.

Circle of concern: You may have an interest and may be impacted by what happens, but you have little control or influence



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In respect to the unhoused challenge, you do not have any control and can make few commitments. However, you do have some influence. You can engage the police chief and other senior leaders in the police department in discussing how to respond, convene staff from other departments, and start conversations with business and community stakeholder groups, including RV owners. As a result of the conversations, you can identify certain options, make recommendations, and then help implement any recommended action. In the process, you are shaping the future.

Shaping the Future

Here are some strategic ideas on helping to create with others a better future.

Start with Your Core Values

In the face of much potential push-back and resistance, you are taking a risk in suggesting a safe parking program. You don't have any control of the outcome in making the proposal. You are likely to be fearful. However, it seems that you have core values of compassion and social justice. (See Career Compass #67 "Effective Leaders Start with Compassion.")

You don't take a big risk unless it aligns with who you are at your core. If the risk aligns with your core values, you confront your fear and act anyway. (See Career Compass #39 "The Courage to Do the Right Thing.") Moreover, you are more likely to persist in the face of opposition if the issue relates to your core values.

There are ways to mitigate the risks. See below.

Acknowledge the Adaptive Challenge

To address any challenge, you must first acknowledge the nature of the challenge. Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky in their book *Leadership on the Line* (2002) identified two kinds of challenges.

Technical challenges are those problems where the solutions are known and can be addressed by management. A classic technical challenge is filling potholes. Through a pavement management program, public works management can identify the potholes and their severity, prioritize which ones get filled, request and receive funding, then assign work crews to do the work, and ensure that the work is done on time and budget and it is quality work. Technical challenges are "tame" problems.

Adaptive challenges are those problems where the solutions are not known and only can be addressed by leadership. There are value conflicts galore and every stakeholder group has its own preferred solution. There are no right or wrong answers.

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Every group has the potential to veto or block your proposal. Adaptive challenges are “wicked” problems.

The challenge of RVs parked on city streets and providing housing for the unhoused is definitely an adaptive challenge. Data and technical solutions will not solve the problem. You need to convene the different stakeholders and start constructive conversations.

Cross boundaries

You cannot address an adaptive problem in your silo. You must cross boundaries within your police department and then cross boundaries outside the department and eventually engage people outside the city organization.

The problem is that when you cross a boundary you have no formal management authority. You cannot force people to follow you. They must decide to follow you. That requires leadership influence.

Therefore, the key leadership question is how do you get to “yes” when everyone can say “no.”

Do the Research

Other local governments and their partners have attempted to address the challenge of RVs housing the unhoused. As a basis to start some needed conversations, you must do some research about how other local government agencies have addressed the challenge, what are some exemplary safe parking programs and other responses, what are some things that have worked, what has not worked, and what are some lessons learned from other programs.

You need to do this initial research and collect data. However, while this kind of research and evidence is necessary, it is inadequate and will not carry the day.

Start a Series of Conversations

As a leader, you must begin to reach out to other stakeholders inside and outside the organization. Given the nature of this adaptive challenge, you (and some other colleagues and interested volunteers) may wish to first enter into conversation with individual group representatives in order to understand their needs, values, interests and preferred solutions. Initially convening all the groups together may just exacerbate the conflict.

The goals of these individual meetings are to listen, understand and acknowledge what is being shared with you, and most importantly create relationship. Relationship and rapport must precede problem-solving.

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These must be authentic conversations. You are not trying to get “buy-in” to your safe parking proposal. People will resist you seeking buy-in even if you have a brilliant idea. Buy-in is essentially manipulative and people can sense it immediately. Instead of buy-in, you are seeking the ideas of the different groups and trying to find ways to incorporate the ideas into the eventual proposal. You need everyone’s “finger-prints” on the program so it is not “your” proposal but “our” proposal.

It is not an authentic conversation unless you are willing to be changed by the conversation. (See Career Compass #61 “Leadership is the Art of Conversation.”)

Ask Catalytic Questions

Authentic conversations are generated by asking powerful questions and listening and acknowledging what you hear.

To identify key values and perspectives, ask some of these “catalytic questions”:

- ✓ For you, what does success look like?
- ✓ How might we address this challenge?
- ✓ What else could we do? What are your ideas to address this challenge?
- ✓ What is a completely different approach to this problem?
- ✓ What are we missing? Who are we missing?
- ✓ How would your neighbors (or businesspeople or the RV tenants) react to this idea?
- ✓ What are we learning about this challenge? What don’t we know?
- ✓ What are your concerns? How could we mitigate those concerns?
- ✓ What are one or two steps forward?
- ✓ To be part of the solution, what are you willing to do?

Authentic conversations require a curious mind.

Reflect Upon Possible Areas of Convergence

You must reflect upon the different conversations. While business and neighborhood groups, non-profit agencies and faith-based leaders may have different interests and values, your conversations will help identify areas of convergence. Neighborhood and business groups may want to remove the RVs. RV tenants may wish a safer environment and certain facilities (restrooms, showers, laundry facilities). As part of their ministries, faith-based groups may wish to support individuals and families who are homeless. Certain non-profit agencies may see a safe parking program with supportive services (for example, case management, permanent housing or health services) as an additional way to serve an at-risk population. Elected officials may want to minimize conflict among the groups.

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Develop a Working Group

Through the initial set of conversations, you are able to identify individuals inside and outside of the city organization who are willing to seek a response to the RV challenge. You can convene the working group to review your research (better yet, you may wish to the group to do the research), mull over ideas, identify resources and assets that groups can contribute (for example, parking lots, services, volunteers, funding) and develop options. Team members are also responsible for communicating back to their groups any updates and progress along the way.

The purpose of the working group is to co-create a desired future.

Frame the Proposal Differently for Different Groups

Instead of seeking “buy-in” and getting resistance, you must intentionally “frame” the issue differently for different groups. A red frame brings out the red in a painting. A blue frame brings out the blue in the same painting.

The act of framing is communicating the proposal in such a way that the target group perceives the positive potential of the idea given their interests. The safe parking program can be framed for residents and business people as an effort to remove RVs from the streets. For faith-based groups, it can be framed as part of their ministries of love. For the police department, it can reduce calls for service and allows the PD to focus on criminal behavior. For RV dwellers, the program promotes their safety and provides needed services and perhaps a path to permanent housing.

Model Hope

In leading change for a better future, you must ask yourself: “How must I show up?”

Even though you may feel scared or at least anxious and uncertain, you must show up with hope. (See Career Compass #119 “How to Create Hope in Scary Times.”)

Hope is not just an optimistic feeling about the future. To hope is an action verb. Hope includes:

- Setting realistic, achievable goals
- Identifying a path forward
- Believing that you can make good things happen
- Taking action and making adjustments
- Tracking progress

If you model hope as well calmness and steadiness, others will tend to follow your lead.

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Turn Stakeholders into Allies

Since there a lot of different departments and external stakeholder groups who have an interest in this challenge, you must seek out partners and allies. By convening stakeholder representatives, listening to their concerns, and incorporating their ideas as appropriate, you can turn stakeholders into partners. Typically, this process creates a more robust and elegant proposal.

Stakeholders can oppose you, even abuse you. Partners or allies may disagree with you but will struggle with you to find a positive path forward.

Allies can provide tangible resources:

- ✓ Ideas
- ✓ Physical facilities
- ✓ Access to their members
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ Volunteers
- ✓ Political support

Of all these resources, political support is perhaps the most critical. Opposing groups and elected officials can easily attack you as the leader. It is a lot more difficult to criticize you if you are standing shoulder to shoulder with neighborhood and business leaders and any nuns and rabbis. Allies spread the risk.

Take a Few Steps Forward

With the support of allies and partners, you can recommend to the city manager and city council a pilot safe parking program at a specific site, perhaps supervised by a non-profit agency, with appropriate services and facilities. By calling the project a “pilot” (even if in your mind it isn’t a pilot), it is seen as “experimental” and thus “reversible.”

In an uncertain world, only action creates clarity about the path forward.

So, take a few steps forward, pivot as necessary, and most importantly learn as you go.

Do Pre-Mortems as well as Post-Mortems

As you proceed, you need to debrief. . .not just at the end of the project but along the way. These are post-action reports commonly conducted by public safety agencies.

The three basic questions include:

1. What is going well?
2. What is not going well?
3. What are we learning to improve our practice or project?

In addition to post-mortems of various kinds, I encourage you to conduct with your working group pre-mortems. Before any actual implementation begins, ask your team

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members to imagine that after 18 months of existence the safe parking program has failed. What happened along the way? What were the ingredients that led to big mistakes or failure? Once you have identified these mistakes, your team can re-engineer your program proposal and implementation plan to avoid or overcome the mistakes.

Co-Creating a Better Future for All

You cannot predict or control the future. The future is uncertain and “messy” as it unfolds. Yet, given your values, you must act to help shape the future for the better and co-create it with others.

Given that groups may block you and criticize you, leading people in shaping a better future is not easy and you have little control or authority. However, once you engage others, incorporate their perspectives, develop an even more robust idea and bring that idea to life, you can look back and feel gratified by contributing to a more positive future for all.



Sponsored by the ICMA Coaching Program, [ICMA Career Compass](#) is a monthly column from ICMA focused on career issues for local government professional staff. Dr. Frank Benest is ICMA's liaison for Next Generation Initiatives and resides in Palo Alto, California. [Read past columns](#) at icma.org/careercompass.

If you have a career question you would like addressed in a future Career Compass, e-mail careers@icma.org or contact Frank directly at frank@frankbenest.com.

To get [ICMA Career Compass](#) delivered to your mailbox, be sure to subscribe to the ICMA Coaching Program emails at icma.org/profile. Under *MyICMA* at the top, select *Communications*, and select **Coaching** under *E-Newsletters*. The ICMA Coaching Program offers free [one-to-one coaching](#) for any local government employee. [Register](#) on CoachConnect to choose a coach and explore more [Coaching Resources](#).

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Sponsored by the ICMA Coaching Program, *Career Compass* is a monthly column focused on leadership and career development issues for local government professional staff. Dr. Frank Benest is ICMA's Liaison for Next Generation Initiatives and resides in Palo Alto, California. If you have a leadership or career question you would like addressed in a future Career Compass, e-mail careers@icma.org or contact Frank directly at frank@frankbenest.com



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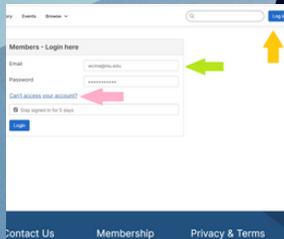
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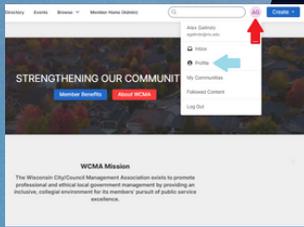
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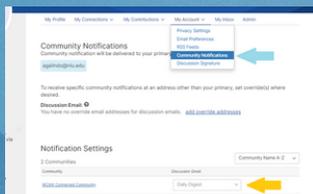
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PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

The Business Case for Dash Cams: Prioritizing ROI in a Precarious Fiscal Climate

The National League of Cities’ 40th annual “City Fiscal Conditions” report, released last November, confirms what many fleet managers already feel: municipalities are bracing for a difficult financial stretch. Based on an analysis of 213 city budgets, the report highlights a “perfect storm” of expiring federal aid, persistent inflation, and cooling revenues.

The data is sobering. Cities project a nearly 2% revenue decline for fiscal year 2025, and only 45% of city finance officers feel confident in meeting their 2026 fiscal needs—a sharp drop from 64% just a year prior. When budgets tighten, “new technology” is often the first line item to be scrutinized or frozen.

However, fiscal sustainability isn’t achieved solely through austerity. For public sector leaders, the challenge is identifying strategic investments that don’t just cost money, but actively recover it. New research conducted by Wakefield Research for Samsara surveyed 400 U.S. leaders across public education and local, state, and federal government. These leaders oversee 85,000 vehicles serving over 100 million citizens. The findings suggest that dash cams have moved from “safety tool” to “budgetary essential.”

The research indicates that dash cams deliver measurable, rapid ROI for strained public sector budgets:

- Budgetary Relief: 96% of agencies with dash cams reported that the investment freed up capital in their existing budgets.
- Rapid Cost Recovery: 68% fully recovered their investment within 12 months; nearly 90% saw returns within the first six months.
- Significant Scale: 63% saved over \$100,000 in the past year alone.
- Insurance Savings: 98% of agencies saw annual insurance premiums decrease.

Exoneration: The Direct Path to Savings

The primary driver of these returns is summarized in the report’s title, The Exoneration Factor. In the public sector, a single “he-said, she-said” accident claim can result in years of litigation and massive settlements. Dash cams provide the objective truth required to exonerate drivers from false accusations of fault or property damage.

The impact of this evidence is immediate. 99% of public sector agencies with dash cams have used footage to exonerate drivers. For the City of Allentown, Pa. this meant an estimated \$370,000 in taxpayer savings by avoiding legal fees and claim costs. As Daniel Steckel, Allentown’s former Fleet Services Bureau Manager, noted, the technology has been a “game changer” for protecting the city’s bottom line.

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Operational Efficiency and Behavioral Change

Beyond legal protection, the data shows a correlation between dash cam usage and operational efficiency. Savings are often a byproduct of improved driver behavior, driven by proactive coaching rather than reactive discipline.

The results are most pronounced in agencies that prioritize this: 54% of those reporting ROI in under three months actively use footage for coaching. In Denver, Colo., the deployment of Samsara AI Dash Cams—which provide real-time alerts for drowsiness or distraction—led to a 94% drop in overall safety incidents and a 99% decrease in harsh driving. When drivers are safer, maintenance costs drop, and vehicles stay on the road longer.

Addressing the Barriers to Adoption

Despite the data, roughly half of public sector agencies have yet to adopt dash cam technology. The primary hurdles remain budget constraints—ironic, given the ROI—and concerns regarding driver privacy.

The Wakefield research suggests these concerns may be overblown. Only 6% of agencies experienced significant public backlash, while 73% of the public either supports or expects the use of this technology for accountability. To navigate these hurdles, the report recommends:

- Reframing the Budget Conversation: Focus on the 68% of agencies that reach break-even within a year, and explore available grants and federal subsidies.
- Formalizing Privacy: Establish clear, written policies that define how footage is stored and who can access it.
- Focusing on Driver Protection: Shift the narrative from “surveillance” to “protection,” emphasizing that the camera is the driver’s best witness against false claims.

Tight budgets are a reality for the foreseeable future. However, by investing in technology that offers a clear path to cost recovery, city leaders can protect both their drivers and their taxpayers.

Download the Full Report: How Dash Cams Reduce Risk and Deliver Clear ROI for the Public Sector

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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.