Local Government and the Profession: Where We Have Been and Where We Need to Go

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Legacy of Leadership

• 1914 – 31 cities operated under the Council/Manager form of government
• 2014 – Nearly one half the U.S. population benefit from work of professional managers
• 2011 – IBM study focused on the value added of professional managers

Legacy of Leadership (cont.)

• Every “Best” list is dominated by Council Manager Cities
• Last 30 years population and job growth in US are dominated by states and regions with Council/Manager plan

2011-2020
the decade of local government


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The 21st Century Challenges

Issues are:

• Multi-Sector
• Multi-Disciplinary
• Intergovernmental

Increasing Confidence in Local Government

• The voters have spoken over and over
• 70% of initiatives and referenda approved

6 practices*
1. add value to the quality of public policy and produce results that matter to their communities.
2. take a long-term and community-wide perspective.
3. commit themselves to ethical practices in the service of public values.
4. help build community and support democratic and community values.
5. promote equitable, fair outcomes and processes.
6. develop and sustain organizational excellence and promote innovation.

* Nalbandian, et al; PM Magazine, 3/07

Fundamental Characteristics To Build a Culture Of Leadership At All Levels

1. Focus and clarity of mission
2. Being anchored around a set of organizational values
3. Selecting the right people to fit the culture
4. Investing in and developing people
5. Recognizing strong performers and high-performing teams

Fundamental Characteristics To Build a Culture Of Leadership At All Levels (cont.)

6. Constantly challenging the organization to be better
7. Focusing relentlessly on performance
8. Fostering personal and organizational accountability
9. Reinforcing the “meaning” and fun in work
10. Resisting the constraints of job titles, job descriptions, and organization charts.
Leadership For the 21st Century: Lessons from Collins & Pink

1. Architects for “Yes”
2. Incremental Revolutionary
3. Master of the Flywheel
4. Stockdale Paradox
5. Design Literacy
6. Symphonic Skills
7. Story
8. Meaning

Challenges and Opportunities

• Communities and regions are on our own
• Our competition is global
• Issues will continue to require us to think across boundaries

Challenges and Opportunities (cont.)

• In an era of scarce resources, performance will increasingly matter
• Trust will be the working capital of innovation
• Will we lead adaptation or be reformed

The Core Characteristics

Building Trust Relationships

a. Communicate and keep a promise
b. Be emotionally present
c. Behave predictably
d. Foster we vs. me
e. Understand risks and be capable of managing the risks
f. Be accountable

*David M. Limardi, ICMA Midwest Regional Director
“Fundamentals for the Future” – September 2014

thank you