

**A REPORT TO THE NORTH CAROLINA CITY/COUNTY  
MANAGERS ASSOCIATION**

**THE NEXT GENERATION**

**Prepared by the Next Generation Committee  
31 December 2005**

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## *Executive Summary*

### Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to describe and recommend to the Board of Directors those measures, policies, and programs the Association could undertake to proactively assist in filling the growing number of vacancies occurring in City/County Manager positions in the State of North Carolina.

### The Problem

There is currently a lack of talent ready to replace city and county managers who are retiring. The problem is growing. This crisis is caused by a convergence of demographic and cultural issues. Some of those issues are:

- There is an anti-government bias. Baby boomers sought out government jobs as an honorable profession. They answered the call of President Kennedy. "...ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Now it is popular to run an election campaign against city hall and to view the City/County Manager as bureaucratic, bungling, and concerned with protecting his/her turf.
- There are fewer numbers of young professionals. As the baby boomer City/County Managers retire, there are fewer young professionals to take their place; thus, the gap is created. You may be familiar with the statistics. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the federal workforce currently qualifies for retirement. Five of eight of public sector employees work in local government.
- There are cultural differences between the baby boomers and Generations X and Y. The X and Y Generations place more emphasis on having a balanced life, while baby boomers are more willing to sacrifice personal interests and family for professional advancement and place the needs of the job before other competing interests. This leads to our profession being less attractive to young professionals.
- As a group, current managers may not have promoted the benefits and rewards of the profession. We also may not have made succession planning an important part of our management of the organization.

### The Solution: A Three-Axis Approach

The committee recommends a three-axis approach:

- 1) The first axis involves what we as managers can do in our individual communities and in the North Carolina City/County Management Association (NCCCMA) to

help solve the problem. Ken Larking, Town Manager of Yadkinville, wrote this section of the report. In his report, Mr. Larking recommends implementing a mentoring program for younger managers based on the California Model (Cal-ICMA). He also recommends training sessions at conferences. On many occasions you can hear mayors across the state voicing their support of a strong mayor system. Mr. Larking recommends asking several mayors and commission chairs who have long tenures and have acted as mentors to managers during their careers, to present programs at the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) and the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) Conferences in order to educate the other elected leaders about the benefits and successes of the Council Manager form of government in North Carolina.

- 2) The second axis involves the Association and the 10 Masters in Public Administration (MPA) producing schools of higher education located in North Carolina. Dr. Ruth DeHoog, Professor and Head of the Political Science Department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, wrote this portion of the report. Dr. DeHoog addresses the academic issues and one of her tools was a survey sent out to the MPA directors at the 10 colleges and universities. Some of her findings are what we might expect. However several are revealing. For example, Dr. DeHoog finds that only forty-one percent (41%) of the state's MPA programs' graduates were placed in local government, including management and non-management positions. In contrast, sixty to seventy percent (60-70%) of MPA graduates went to work for local government in the 1960s and early 70s. Dr. DeHoog recommends a number of proposals to attract MPA students to the local government profession. One of her recommendations is to offer free registrations to MPA students and MPA Directors to the Association's Winter Conference and another is the offering of paid internships for MPA students, perhaps through the establishment of an endowment. Central to the idea of increasing the number of graduates who select local government for a career, is developing the relationships between the Association, its members, and the academic community. Dr. DeHoog also makes recommendations concerning this issue.
- 3) Axis three is a recommendation to use retired managers to help bridge the gap caused by the imbalance in the supply and demand of city and county managers. Jim Westbrook authored this short section and recommends the Association ask the NCLM and the NCACC to seek legislation that would permit retired local government employees to work on an interim basis after retirement. Teachers in North Carolina are currently allowed to continue teaching after retirement; thus, a precedent for re-engaging retired public sector employees following their retirement has already been established.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) web site ([www.ICMA.org](http://www.ICMA.org)) has an excellent section, devoted to the Next Generation issue. This report contains many more recommendations than can be covered in the summary. All of

these recommendations cannot be pursued by the Association at the same time and the Next Generation problem will not be cured with this report or within the next year by the Association. It is a long-term problem and one requiring a long-term solution. However, now is the time to begin and this report is just a starting point.

Respectfully Submitted,

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The committee wishes to thank Charles Archer for coordinating the meeting and his advice and counsel.

# *I Role of Current Local Government Managers*

## Introduction

As members of ICMA and North Carolina City/County Management Association (NCCCMA), local government managers have a responsibility to ensure that communities in North Carolina continue to benefit from competent, professional managers long after they have retired.

At some point in everyone's career it is inevitable that the time will come to "pass the torch" to the next generation of local government managers. Recognizing this, the NCCCMA has charged the "Future Generations Committee" to develop strategies for increasing the available pool of potential managers. This section of the report attempts to address the role that current managers can play in increasing the available pool of talent. Strategies discussed include:

- Utilizing the California model that the International City/County Management Association has endorsed for potential mentoring relationships
- Increasing opportunities for younger managers to network and learn from "seasoned managers" during regular Association conferences and other special training programs
- Ensuring that there is a good representation from younger managers/assistants on all Association committees
- Identifying and encouraging small town mayors and other elected officials who have a history of molding young managers into successful seasoned managers

This section of the report will address and build upon these four strategies and offer other strategies discussed by the Future Generations committee.

## Implement the Cal-ICMA Mentoring Program

Mentoring is an excellent way for veteran managers to encourage younger managers and department heads to continue in the profession. ICMA has endorsed the Cal-ICMA Coaching Program as model for state associations interested in building the available pool of professional managers. The following are some highlights of this free program:

- A series of sessions on various topics offered over the phone via a conference call. All one needs to do to participate in the program is call the number provided to listen and participate in the session. Topics for the most recent Cal-ICMA program include:
  - Having It All – Building a Great Career and Life
  - How to Create a Great Coaching Relationship
  - Resolving Differing Views among Public Officials

- Interpreting and Using Your Management Style Analysis Report (The Cal-ICMA website offers a “Management Style Analysis”)
- Developing Strategic Partnerships – Leveraging the Skills and Resources of Others
- Engaging Citizens through New Technologies
- Caring for and Feeding Your Team – Motivating People
- Veteran managers are matched up with aspiring managers in a one-to-one coaching program. Aspiring managers can search a “Coaches Gallery” on the Cal-ICMA website and review the profiles of veteran managers who have volunteered to be a mentor. Cal-ICMA also offers help in finding aspiring managers the right fit.
- Small group coaching sessions are offered for first time city or county managers and those applying for first time manager positions.
- A “Future City Managers Workshop” is offered to anyone interested in learning more about the profession.
- Local area networking events provide new and aspiring managers with an opportunity to interact with nearby city and county managers and talk about building a career in local government management.

The California model for addressing the shrinking talent pool of professional local government managers is a multi-pronged approach. It is a completely voluntary and free program that offers a variety of resources for new and aspiring managers. Implementing some or this entire program would enable those considering the profession in North Carolina to pick the approach that best suits their needs and abilities.

### Conferences and Training Sessions

One of the best ways for the NCCCMA to encourage and develop younger managers into becoming better managers is to offer programs during the conferences and other training sessions targeted to younger and/or less experienced managers. For example:

- Since these managers are typically found in smaller communities, offer sessions that focus on small town and small county issues that are led by more experienced managers.
- Provide leadership training during conferences and/or special training sessions
- Have panel discussions led by “seasoned managers” that focuses on lessons learned during their careers – keep in mind that lessons learned don’t have to be rooted in negative experiences since this may turn people away from the profession
- Continue to provide training sessions that aim to enhance the core areas of expertise identified in the ICMA Volunteer Credentialing program.

In addition, encourage the pairing up of veteran and younger managers during conference receptions.

- Ask for ICMA-CM managers to volunteer to be paired up with a younger manager during conference receptions – when possible, these managers should be paired up

with younger managers that work within the same or nearby counties. Conference applications should also ask younger managers if they would like to be paired with a veteran manager.

### Get Younger Managers More Involved in the Association

In order to maintain continuity in any organization, it is important to bring “new blood” into decision-making positions. Whenever a decision is made about appointing members to committees and sub-committees, consideration should be made based on the current make-up of the committee to ensure diversity.

The benefit of bringing younger managers onto these committees is two-fold:

- By having a tangible role in the association, the younger manager has some “buy-in” to the organization and the profession
- The younger manager has an opportunity to network and learn from the veteran managers on the committee.

### Mentoring Mayors and Commission Chairs

Several small town mayors have gained a reputation for helping to mold new managers into very successful “seasoned managers.” Mayor Tom Gwynn of Elkin and Mayor Roy Maness of Troy are two examples of elected officials who have served as mentors to the managers who have served their towns. Strategies for tapping into this knowledge base include the following:

- The NCCCMA should encourage the NCLM and the NCACC to develop a session at its annual conference that encourages small town and county elected officials and especially mayors to serve as mentors to their managers.
- The NCCCMA should also consider hosting a panel session of mayors, commission chairs, and other elected officials to discuss their expectations of managers.

There are undoubtedly many other examples of elected officials who recognize that their managers will most likely spend 3-5 years at that location and move on to a larger city or county. They know that these managers will not be there forever, so they have decided to teach and encourage them while they are there. This benefits the current town, the manager and any other organization the manager works for in the future.

### Other Strategies

Other ways for those in the profession to help with the issue of the shrinking talent pool include:

- Encouraging the professional development of department heads within their organization that they have identified as being potential successors or potential managers in different locations.
- Encouraging Range Riders to visit new managers soon after they begin employment. This would provide new managers with an opportunity to talk with someone who has been in their shoes and could offer advice on how to be a successful manager.
- Encouraging regular countywide or regional manager meetings. These meetings would bring managers of varied experiences together to network and discuss issues each is dealing with in their communities.

### Conclusion

It is understandable for people to take on a me-first attitude with respect to their careers. However, most local government managers did not choose this profession for selfish reasons. We recognize that local government is where the rubber meets the road and that it is absolutely essential for cities and counties to be led by competent and professional managers.

The level of professionalism within local government directly affects the lives of its citizens. Current managers have a responsibility to the organization that they currently serve and any organization that they may potentially serve to encourage the next generation of managers to be ready to lead.

## *II The Academic Issues*

As the ICMA has emphasized in the national conference and reports, the demand for professional managers will continue to increase steadily in the next decade, as the “baby boomer” generation retires and creates vacancies that will not be filled by current midlevel managers or the supply of recent graduates from MPA programs in the state. The committee noted the materials and data provided to the profession by the ICMA and its task force on the subject, and discussed the particular areas of need, opportunity, and programs found in North Carolina’s local governments and educational institutions.

### Academic Issues:

In this section, the current supply of MPA graduates is reviewed, followed by a summary of the issues faced further down the pipeline for undergraduate college students and those in middle and high schools. The committee discussed several approaches to encouraging students to consider a local government career and developing a larger pool of qualified candidates for manager positions. This section begins with a focus on the current students in the state’s MPA programs, and then moves to undergraduates, and finally to middle and high school students in North Carolina.

### MPA Programs, Faculty, and Students:

North Carolina has ten MPA programs with some coverage of local government administration and management, either with separate courses, or integrated into more general courses and topics. The MPA programs are at the following universities:

Appalachian State University  
East Carolina State University  
North Carolina Central University  
North Carolina State University  
UNC-Chapel Hill  
UNC-Charlotte  
UNC-Greensboro  
UNC-Pembroke  
UNC-Wilmington  
Western Carolina University

In September 2005, MPA directors of eight of these programs responded to a survey sent by one of the committee members to all the programs, to collect information about their students, course offerings, and recommendations for promoting local government management careers. The following section summarizes their responses. These questions and the options that were posed for reactions were suggested in the Next Generation Committee meeting in August.

The students in these MPA programs can be categorized into roughly three groups:

- 1) Traditional age, full-time pre-service students, who have characteristics of Generation X as described in the ICMA report;
- 2) Part-time, mid-career students who already work in professional positions, but often seek managerial training and upward or career mobility in their current organizations, including local governments; and
- 3) “Career changers,” usually non-traditional age, part-time students who come from business, university, teaching, or human service occupations, which they are seeking to leave. Some MPA programs are more oriented toward full-time pre-service students, while others enroll more part-time working professionals in evening and weekend formats. Therefore, some programs are more likely to be accessible, both in terms of their schedules and geographical location, to current city and county employees than others.

The attached appendix provides the specific averages and ranges for each of the demographic questions about recent MPA graduates and the current composition of the MPA student bodies. Over half the current MPA students are female, and minority enrollments range from 5-65%, with an average of 21% in the eight responding NC programs. These programs graduated an average of 18 students per year.

Traditionally, ASU and UNC-Chapel Hill have supplied graduates who have pursued careers as managers in NC cities and counties. However, over the last decade or two, fewer students in these and other MPA programs have taken positions in local government when they graduate. Most of the MPA programs responding to the survey reported that less than half of their recent MPA graduates were placed in local government, including positions in a range of management and non-management positions. The average was 41% for these eight programs. The primary placements for MPA graduates, both in-service and pre-service students, appear to fall into the following categories: 1) federal employment, increasingly open and attractive to graduates; 2) nonprofit agencies and advocacy organizations, which have grown dramatically in size and demand for professionals; 3) consulting companies and contractors, a growing segment serving all levels of government; and 4) local governments, where many students in North Carolina find jobs in professional (e.g., planning, budgeting) and managerial positions, but not as often as chief executives.

The committee discussed the various barriers to MPA students choosing local government management as a career. These are listed below, and the follow-up survey asked MPA directors to check which ones they believed were most significant issues for their students. The following responses to this question are ordered from those option most often selected to least often:

- perception that jobs are difficult and stressful
- few paid internships in local government
- lack of exposure to local government management before coming to the program
- limited female or minority role models
- perceived low pay

- perceived lack of local government job opportunities for them
- lack of appropriate preparation for the jobs
- dual career concerns with spouses
- bad reputation of government work
- more flexibility in nonprofit or consulting careers

Other reasons were added by a couple of the responding MPA directors as follows:

- some students simply prefer federal, state, nonprofit, or consulting career opportunities
- perceived/actual need for being politically connected to get jobs
- low job security at city manager level

At least three programs are already in place to encourage MPA students and graduates to pursue careers in local government management include the following:

- 1) ICMA Fellows Program (Local Government Management Fellow Program): This highly competitive career-development opportunity places recent MPA graduates in a full-time, local government management-track position with rotational assignments and direct mentorship under senior managers.
- 2) NCCCMA Scholarship Program: This named scholarship program provides one year of funding (currently \$1800) for a new full-time student at each of the nine MPA programs in the state.
- 3) Local Government Internships: Pre-service MPA students are required by their programs to complete internships, many of which are paid and are in local governments. However, many are not a separate line item in city or county budgets, and do not entail a continuing commitment to a paid internship.

The Association may be able to promote and publicize these opportunities and their benefits more widely among North Carolina managers. For example, the Local Government Management Fellow Program is looking for more cities and counties to sign up for a fellow. This can be a way to gain high quality talent in hopes of getting high quality work from them, as well as encouraging the fellow to stay in the government that they work for.

#### Proposals to Attract MPA Students:

The committee discussed various options to encourage MPA students to consider local government management as a career. The committee suggested several ideas, and the MPA directors who responded to the survey endorsed the following, with these ordered from those that were most often preferred to those less preferred:

- Offer free registrations to MPA students & MPA Directors for the February Conference;
- Offer a session at the Winter Conference for MPA students where the students and managers can exchange information and perspectives;

- Encourage all managers to establish one-year post-masters internship programs in their cities for MPA graduates to work directly with the managers;
- Encourage managers to serve as adjunct faculty in all MPA programs;
- Increase the amount and number of NCCCMA Scholarships;
- Get the NCCCMA Scholarship funds out to the MPA programs earlier in the year;
- Offer paid internships in local governments for MPA students, maybe through an endowment;
- Train elected officials to help them understand the need for diversity in the management profession;
- Pair MPA students with members at the February conference as mentors;
- Require (or encourage) NCCCMA members to serve as mentors, both to MPA students, as well as current employees moving up the career ladder.

A couple of the MPA directors offered these additional suggestions:

- Ask ICMA to provide all MPA programs with local government emphases with a library of basic CCM books for use in the Department's programs, and reduce subscription rates to *Public Management* as a means of keeping MPA faculty advised of emerging and changing issues in local government management;
- Have NCCCMA sponsor a speaker initiative, where it pays accomplished current or retired city/county managers to travel to MPA programs and speak to students. Students need to hear from enthusiastic people who loved their careers in local government!
- Focus on improving the perceived value of the MPA degree by working on the "demand" side in trying to get a better idea about why the MPA remains a relatively obscure degree, even among public managers. NCCCMA, ICMA, the NLC, and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) itself need to do everything we can to educate managers at all levels of local government about the MPA degree and why it is superior to the MBA as a preparation for addressing the coming dearth of city and county managers.

#### Undergraduate Programs at North Carolina Colleges and Universities:

Currently there is no concerted effort in the state to acquaint undergraduate students with local government management careers. Courses in local government, urban politics, and public administration are taught in political science departments at many colleges and universities, but the students may not become aware of the career opportunities in North Carolina by this means. Several programs are in place, however, in specific locales to encourage students to participate in campus opportunities in service learning, civic engagement, internships, and/or local government awareness. In addition, many of the MPA programs recruit specifically from the pool of current undergraduates at their own or other universities, and in the process, may acquaint them with local government careers as well. Nonetheless, many of the civic engagement, service learning, and

internship programs seem to be directed more at the nonprofit agencies in communities, and less often in local governments.

The committee suggested the following options be considered:

- Develop relationships with undergraduate programs to expose students to the profession through being guest speakers, providing shadowing opportunities, etc.;
- Send out information and materials to undergraduate advisors and internship coordinators in political science departments and in internship offices to indicate the career potential;
- Provide and publicize undergraduate internships;
- Partner with NCLM & NCACC to help elected officials understand the importance of internships; encourage University Chancellors to speak to elected officials in their region about this;
- Utilize mentoring Mayors and Commission Chairs somehow;
- Publicize various program models for faculty and students that have been successful in certain colleges and universities.

#### Middle and High School Students:

The committee recommends that NCCCMA also consider methods of reaching the younger populations that may not be aware of the excitement and career potential of local government management. Today few high school students know what a city manager is or what the job involves. In the state curriculum, most high school students get little or no exposure to local government, and if they do, it is usually in middle school or ninth grade, before they begin thinking about careers. The committee agreed that the membership should be encouraged to volunteer as guest speakers, attend career fairs, and generally be more visible in various community events that young people might attend.

The following example of one jurisdiction's successful efforts over the past several years to engage high school students is summarized by committee member, Tony N. Brown, Deputy County Manager, Halifax County:

*Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce has a program called Pathways to Career Success/Youth Leadership. This program exposes 11th and 12th graders to a variety of events once a month throughout the school year; one session is called Government Day. As part of that afternoon session, we established a mock Halifax County Commissioner Board Meeting.*

*This mock meeting includes actual elected officials to guide the selected "student commissioners" through a mock County Commissioners Meeting, complete with a real topic and agenda, which includes their "public input". We typically try to have a topic that would be of interest to the students so they may be more "vested" into their arguments. The entire process typically takes less than 2.5 hours - depending on how much discussion we have afterwards. Our last session involved*

*the students addressing the issue of a countywide curfew for those under 18 years of age.*

## APPENDIX: MPA PROGRAM SURVEY RESULTS

Responses to Demographic Questions were received from ASU, ECU, NC State, UNC-W, UNC-G, UNC-CH, UNC-C, and Pembroke State. Averages from the responding programs are noted with ranges of the various responses in parentheses.

- 84            How many MPA students are currently enrolled in your program?  
*(range 53-166)*
  
- 18            How many students have graduated from your program, on average, in the  
last three years? *(range 10-26)*
  
- 41%          What percentage of these graduates (last three years) have taken local  
government management positions within the first year of completing  
their degree (both entry-level and management)? *(range 20%-60%)*
  
- 57%          What percentage of your current MPA students are women?  
*(range 39-63%)*
  
- 38%          Approximately what percentage of these MPA students are pre-service?  
*(range 10%-70%)*
  
- 51%          What percentage of current MPA students are full-time?  
*(range 10%-100%)*
  
- 21%          What percentage of your current MPA students are minorities?  
*(range 5%-65%)*
  
- 34%          What percentage of your current MPA students is working in local  
government? *(range 7%-55%)*

### *III Bridging the Gap*

During the committee meeting, the participants noted that with many Managers retiring, we should be able to use the experience of those Managers as an asset to help bridge the gap of the vacancies that would occur. Our discussion centered on the following observations:

- Most of the long term unfilled vacancies would occur in the smaller, more rural cities, towns and counties
- The current list of vacancies in ‘The Administrator’ are symptomatic of future trends. There are currently more than thirty (30) cities, towns, and counties listed who do not have a professional Manager in place
- Many of the Governing Bodies are reluctant to hire “fresh out” of graduate school Managers because of the complicated issues faced by local governments-financial, inter-governmental, water/sewer, and rapid growth to mention just a few
- If we are optimistic that the number of new MPA graduates who will go to work in local government will increase, there would still be a gap

Our discussion focused on using the retired Managers to help fill the gap. State law currently prohibits this option. In considering the use of retired Managers in an interim capacity, the following issues were discussed:

- Would the Local Government Retirement System approve?
- Currently the State allows teachers to retire and continue to teach. This accommodation was made because of the shortage of qualified teachers in the State system.
- How might we draft legislation that would allow Managers and local governments the same options?
- Since the retirement of baby boomers will occur across all the professions and skills used by local government, it makes sense to ask for legislation that would cover all local government employees. This would give the governing body the greatest latitude to use retired employees to temporarily fill vacancies caused by retirements.

The Committee recommends the NCCCMA work with the North Carolina League of Municipalities and the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners to jointly seek sponsorship of legislation in the General Assembly that would allow local government employees to work in local government after they retire from their jobs. In advocating for the change, the NCLM should work with officials of the Retirement System to insure any concerns they may have regarding the actuarial soundness of the system are accommodated in any proposed changes.