

# EVERY EXPLORER NEEDS A NAVIGATOR

Inspire Your Students to  
**Put Democracy  
into Action**



**As a college professor**, you are preparing your students for successful lives and careers. You challenge them to read and think critically, to be open to new ideas and solve problems creatively, to work collaboratively with others, and to develop their leadership abilities. As an educator, you inspire them to public service.

However, it may be getting harder to convince students to seek a career in public service when there are few examples of compromise or of public officials working on behalf of the common good at the state and federal levels of government.

That's why a focus on local government can be beneficial. Local government is where the ideal of democracy is most tangible and where government is most accountable and accessible to its citizens. Of the three levels of government, local government has the greatest impact on the quality of our daily lives.

## **Democracy in Action**

Responding to the needs of their residents, local governments provide the services that help our communities thrive. Though they may differ significantly from state to state, local governments may have total or partial responsibility for:

- Making our communities safe by providing police, fire, and EMS services.
- Creating jobs by attracting and retaining businesses.
- Ensuring children have access to an education by providing funding for schools and teachers.
- Improving the quality-of-life by securing land for parks and building community centers.
- Providing transportation by constructing and maintaining roads, creating train and bus systems, and building airports and bike paths.

In local government, professional managers make sure it all happens. Hired by the elected governing body, they are the key decision-makers in local government, the senior-level city, town, and county executives whose decisions affect people in thousands of communities across the United States. Professional local government managers are like CEOs of corporations, but they see the community in its entirety, without being tied

to one department, one interest group, or one political point of view. Working in partnership with elected officials, citizens, and business leaders, professional managers translate policy into actions and visionary ideas into real results. They oversee the day-to-day operations of local government and ensure that public services are provided effectively, efficiently, ethically, and equitably. They are the catalysts for making good things happen in our communities.

“The ability of the manager to help maintain and manage this city in the best possible way is crucial.”

—Bill Floyd,  
Former Mayor, Decatur, GA

Inspire your students to seek careers that put democracy in action. Introduce them to the importance of local government and the role that professional local government managers play in building communities we're proud to call home.

## Encourage Your Students to Consider a Career in Local Government

A leadership gap is looming within local government. The current generation of professional local government managers—inspired to enter public service by President John F. Kennedy's 1961 Inaugural Address—is nearing retirement. Local governments are looking for a new brand of leadership.

In the next few decades, local governments will lead the way in developing creative solutions to extraordinary problems. This will require leaders who look beyond traditional and political boundaries to innovate and make meaningful change.

**These could be your students.** As you help them think about their futures, encourage them to enter public service and consider a career in professional local government management.

## Resources for You

The *Life, Well Run* campaign, an ICMA (International City/County Management Association) initiative to raise awareness of and

appreciation for professional local government managers, has developed materials that can help your students learn more about local government and careers as professional local government managers:

- **Download the *Life, Well Run* poster** from [LifeWellRun.org/join-the-campaign](https://LifeWellRun.org/join-the-campaign) and display it in your college or university to encourage awareness of the profession.
- **Show “Local Government 101,”** a free, 10-minute Prezi produced by *Life, Well Run*, which explains the origins and functions of government and the role of the professional local government manager. Go to [LifeWellRun.org/join-the-campaign](https://LifeWellRun.org/join-the-campaign) to download this and other campaign resources for your students.
- **Visit [LifeWellRun.org](https://LifeWellRun.org)** for more information about how local government works and the role professional local government managers play in building and shaping communities. Here, your students also will find career advice on how to become a professional local government manager.
- **Check out the interactive map on [LifeWellRun.org](https://LifeWellRun.org)** for success stories from professionally-managed communities. These stories will really help your students get a sense of the exciting work that occurs in communities around the country and the role of professional local government managers in building communities we’re proud to call home.
- **Form an ICMA Student Chapter in your college or university.** To learn more, go to [http://icma.org/en/icma/career\\_network/education/student\\_chapters](http://icma.org/en/icma/career_network/education/student_chapters).

**For more information on how to use these materials or to learn more about the *Life, Well Run* campaign, contact Catherine Smith, campaign manager, at 202-962-3632 or [csmith@icma.org](mailto:csmith@icma.org).**



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# ICMA

*Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*