

EVERY GOVERNMENT NEEDS A QUARTER- BACK.

How professional local government managers help elected officials translate policy and vision into results.





Your Professional Manager and You: Building a Community You're Proud to Call Home

Why did you run for office? You saw a need, had an idea, and seized the opportunity to move forward with your dream of making a difference for your community. Chances are your passion tends more toward imagining possibilities than hiring staff or managing operations. Yet dreaming and imagining alone won't get the job done.

“The relationship between a mayor and a city manager is an extremely important relationship because it's that relationship that ensures that people are on the same page in terms of the city government, and that we actually get things done.”

—Julian Castro, Mayor,
City of San Antonio

A professional city, town, or county manager partners with you to help you achieve the goals you've established for your community. He or she handles the day-to-day management of your government organization by preparing budgets, managing staff, supervising department heads, and delivering public services. The manager works with you to develop and implement your vision, while remaining strictly non-partisan.

In a 2016 ICMA review, two-thirds (66%) of the cities that received a Moody's Aaa rating employ a professional manager, proving once again that communities managed by a highly trained, nonpolitical chief executive are more fiscally efficient and credit worthy. That number is up from 61% in 2009.

Professional local government managers are vital partners of elected officials. Managers help you:

- translate policy and visionary ideas into tangible results
- develop sound approaches to community challenges
- align your government's administrative systems with your community's values, mission, and policy goals

The Professional Management Difference: Training and Experience

Professional managers have years of experience working in government. They often begin their careers in policy or administrative positions and then serve as assistant managers before becoming full managers. They also bring technical knowledge, expertise, and deep dedication to public service.

Professional Management Produces Results

- In its first 16 years of incorporation and with strategic planning by a cooperative council and professional manager, Midland, NC grew its tax base nearly 18 percent, created a surplus of jobs in manufacturing and successfully marketed itself as a hub for rail commerce. A focus on quality of life and schools has also contributed to a 19 percent growth in population.
- When Phoenix, AZ, faced a budget crisis in 2009, the city manager created an innovation and efficiency task force that has produced savings of nearly \$60 million, with a goal of reaching \$100 million by 2015. The city is fiscally healthy, has a structurally balanced budget, and has maintained its Aaa bond rating.
- The city manager of Painesville, OH, created the city's first economic development strategic plan, which led to the addition of 3 companies and 500 new jobs, more than \$16 million in grant funding to complete vital capital projects, and a revitalized downtown district along with parks, new housing, and increased public safety.
- The mayor and city council of Olathe, KS, had a vision for a new world-class university campus focused on research, education, and innovation. The city manager forged a partnership with the Olathe Chamber of Commerce and began the time-consuming work of growing the vision. In 2011, the International Animal Health and Food Safety Institute opened at Kansas State University Olathe.

“I think that here in Glenview we have a fantastic partnership between our village manager, assistant village manager, the staff of the village, and the board president and trustees. They recognize the value you get with professionals in those positions.”

—Betsy Baer, Executive Director,
Glenview Chamber of Commerce

Managers usually hold at least a bachelor’s degree in public administration, political science, or business. Many also enter the profession with a master’s degree in public administration or a related field.

The Three E’s: Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Ethics

Like the CEO of a corporation, a professional local government manager brings the best practices

in financial management, administration, and personnel practices to running the business of government.

He or she is trained to understand effective budgeting, manage staff, and look for efficiencies.

Professional managers are committed to the highest standards of equity, transparency, honor, integrity, political neutrality, responsible stewardship of public resources, and to fostering an ethical culture throughout the government.

In addition, professional managers who are members of ICMA agree to uphold its Code of Ethics, which governs conduct and sets the standard for excellence.

Resources for Elected Officials

Life, Well Run is an initiative of ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, the professional association for more than 11,000 members worldwide. ICMA offers useful resources, for elected officials including guidelines for hiring a professional manager. We would like to offer you a free copy of *Leading Your Community: A Guide for Local Elected Leaders* (both in hard copy and e-version).

Visit LifeWellRun.org to learn more.