



Towards a New Model of Inclusive Governance for Local Governments

**Administrative Services, Diversity, and
Innovation in Local Government**

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Executive Summary

Local governments are under increased pressure to not only meet the needs of their growing communities, but to more fervently embrace their values of equity and inclusion. These challenges include declining trust in government, deepening needs to promote social justice, and a declining workforce and talent pipeline threatening the existence of local governments. In this paper, we argue the imperative for local governments to embrace a radical model of inclusive governance that will reinvigorate public service, both for public servants and the communities they serve. This model involves embracing equity-based continuous improvement, data-driven decision-making, and empathetic people services, each of which has shown repeated successes in local governments across the country. To address this grand challenge, we posit that local governments writ large must reject traditional beliefs about ‘neutrality’ to remove existing power structures as we move towards the future of local government.

Introduction

Over the last several years, there has been a desire from both local government professionals and residents alike for local governments to take action in creating more equitable and inclusive communities, while still meeting and exceeding the needs of the residents through essential services. However, this movement has gained even more momentum since 2020, and local governments are trying to keep up with the private sector and State and Federal Governments to meet the needs of their communities, both externally in the broader community and internally in the workplace, through modernization.

In this paper, we are addressing the grand challenge of modernizing and reinvigorating public service. Modernization will require local governments to embrace a radical model of inclusive governance, which involves deeply institutionalizing three clear components into their organizational culture - an equity-based culture of continuous improvement; data-driven community and public services, and empathetic workforce and people management. This model also relies on rejecting traditional beliefs about neutrality in government administration, and not letting neutrality stop governments from doing what is necessary to operationalize their core values.

In this paper, we will discuss the importance of the three factors working together to drive the core values through action. These three factors do not exist in a vacuum, as they play an integral role in the success of the other and modernization in general. Local governments need to promote equity and inclusion in their broader communities. In order to create these inclusive communities, equity and inclusion also must be created and fostered in the workplace, which helps to attract and retain employees. These employees then are able to utilize metrics and data that account for the full-picture, to better serve their communities. This new model of inclusive governance will allow for local governments to meet and exceed expectations in their field, in their workplaces, and most importantly in their communities.

Equity-Based Culture of Continuous Improvement

Based on the NAPA Grand Challenge – Foster Social Equity

The first step towards an inclusive model of governance involves critically engaging with issues of social justice and inequities in their community and their organizations. The relationship between government institutions and historically excluded communities is rife with complex and often uncomfortable truths. While members of these communities have been outspoken about these inequities for decades, if not centuries, the civil rights movement of 2020, also known as the racial uprising, highlighted the moral imperative that governments have to modernize with a bent towards fostering social equity and justice. This movement combined with the sudden shift in organizational behavior due to the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that inclusion and social justice is integral to the functioning of government organizations, not merely an aspirational value. Any hope of achieving inclusive governments requires identifying the issues and challenges that local governments must overcome, understanding the experiences of practitioners in the field, and committing to implementing solutions that center empathy and understanding.

Issues and Challenges

The backdrop upon which we explore how to modernize governments to foster social equity and justice is grim. Beyond the continued systemic inequities highlighted by historically excluded communities, the political landscape currently favors laws that roll back civil rights. Whether it's the wave of book bans and anti-transgender

legislation sweeping state legislatures across the nation¹, the lack of accountability for law enforcement officers who have killed 889 people in 2022², or a Supreme Court that appears poised to continue rolling back civil rights³, many Americans wake up questioning whether the civil rights they've fought for and earned will be rescinded by government institutions. The incomprehensibly dense action taken against historically excluded communities creates an existential question for local governance: how should local governments, those institutions directly serving their communities, respond? For public service professionals, each of these challenges further compounds the moral obligation that public institutions have to eliminate harm by promoting equity and justice.

Within individual jurisdictions, there are many challenges to modernizing government in a way that fosters social equity and justice. For example, many local governments have structural challenges to how leadership and policymaking positions are filled. In practice, these structures are implemented in such a way that anyone can work for their local government, but the highest-level executives and policymakers in most organizations are chosen through the electoral process. This bifurcation often results in a difference in values between elected leaders and the merit-based public administrators; under the status quo, that value difference can prove challenging for administrators who are interested in pursuing social equity-centered administrative practices, but face resistance from elected officials. This is further challenged by the common belief of residents of cities and towns across the nation expecting local government institutions to remain 'apolitical'. While ideal in theory, as public administrators in the field, we argue that it is impossible for local government institutions to be truly apolitical, as every service an organization chooses to fund or provide is a reflection of what the organization values (and, conversely, every service an organization chooses not to fund or provide reflects an organization's values). This is even further exacerbated by the pressures of administrators to protect the health, safety, and welfare of their community in the face of social injustice.

It is critical to recognize that every budgetary decision is inherently a political decision. Maintaining the position that policy decisions are ultimately left up to elected officials creates a paradox for public administrators: organizations are expected to both effectively and equitably deliver services to the community while also administering policy decisions that inherently prevent effective and equitable service delivery.. Public administrators should not hide behind an impossible belief that they can be neutral and impartial and are simply doing their job or following orders. This position is misaligned with the efforts making local government more equitable. As subject matter experts, it is the responsibility of public administrators to ensure that detrimental impacts from policy decisions is prevented or mitigated as much as possible, actions that are generally tied to funding.

It is even more difficult for many smaller jurisdictions who struggle to modernize with a focus on equity and justice due to resource constraints. Many jurisdictions in urban areas have built out robust programs and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), civil rights, and/or social justice offices, dedicating financial and human resources towards building expertise within their organizations. These resources are often more difficult to secure in smaller or more rural jurisdictions. In a survey of human resource managers (n =) across state and local government agencies, three major barriers were present across the vast majority of surveyed jurisdictions (results described in Table A). The majority of sampled jurisdictions had populations fewer than 10,000, and more than half of respondents work in rural areas or small towns. Interestingly, the top barriers relate almost exclusively to human resources challenges

¹ ABC News. (2022, October 1). Older LGBTQ activists say history is repeating itself. MSN. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/older-lgbtq-activists-say-history-is-repeating-itself/ar-AA12tAbo>

² Mapping Police Violence, Inc. (n.d.). Mapping police violence. Mapping Police Violence. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://mappingpoliceviolence.us/>

³ Alvey, R. (2022, October 3). *Supreme Court opens a new and likely contentious term with some Texas cases on the line*. MSN. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/supreme-court-opens-a-new-and-likely-contentious-term-with-some-texas-cases-on-the-line/ar-AA12yPrH>

– in fact, only 62% of respondents listed cost as a barrier, with 37% describing financial barriers as only somewhat of an issue.⁴

Table A. Barriers to Implementing DEI Programs⁵

Barrier	Percent Agree
Lack of diverse candidates in local labor market	87%
Difficulty attracting or retaining diverse staff	85%
Factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing Great Resignation, and difficulty attracting and retaining employees generally	74%

This tension between supposedly ‘apolitical’ administration, political and ideological policymaking, and resource constraints puts pressure on the next generation of public administrators and their respective education programs. Students in public affairs or public administration programs across the country must grapple with this same tensions. Under the current system, students are learning about government and nonprofit sectors through an apolitical lens. These future public administrators are not often encouraged (and often discouraged) from embracing the political values inherent in the system; they are taught to compartmentalize or code switch in order to progress professionally. Modernizing local government services will undoubtedly require modernizing education in public administration with special emphasis placed on social equity and justice to ensure that the next wave of future public administrators will bring us closer to ensuring that public servants represent the public they serve. Such modernization can develop through better understanding the experiences of public administrators on the job, as depicted through two case studies below.

Case Study: Inequity in Trash Collection Services

The City of Torrance, California was seeing an increase in illegally dumped trash throughout the City in 2019. As the City transitioned into an app for reporting concerns and issues in the City, Staff began to receive many more requests to pick up large items but also made it easier to report when and where there was illegally dumped trash throughout the City. With the increased requests for staff to collect large items and increased reporting of large items being dumped, such as furniture, appliances, and mattresses, staff could not keep up with demand. The immediate response of Public Works management for the City was to increase enforcement efforts of illegally dumped items.

There was no online or computer-based data tracking as it related to the actual calls and the types of items that were being reported but field staff was keeping track of via white boards, photos, and written work routes. Field staff had reported that the majority of illegal dumping was occurring in neighborhoods with multi-family housing. Interestingly enough, the City of Torrance did not service larger multifamily units but was still responsible for the illegally dumped items in the public right of way. The City immediately jumped into investigating resources for enforcement such as cameras and increased patrols by code enforcement.

The Staff Analyst that was assigned to the task took it upon themselves to do a further investigation of the cause to fully understand the best approach for a solution. The Staff Analyst found that the majority of the residents that lived in the multi-family units were of lower-income and tended to be people-of-color. After quick interviews

⁴ MissionSquare Research Institute. (n.d.). Managing Workforce DEI in Local Government. MissionSquare Research Institute. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://slge.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/managing-lq-workforce-dei-part1-survey-data.pdf> (p. 23)

⁵ “

with residents and staffs, it was clear that the residents were not aware that they could call their private hauler for large items. The owners of the property were the ones responsible for the billing and service, so residents never received notices or informational flyers letting them know that they could even request such services. The Staff Analyst also found that the City could leverage contracts with private haulers to ensure that residents would be made aware of large-item pickups and also encourage property owners to let tenants that know upon notice of moving that they could access the private hauler services.

Additionally, the Staff Analyst had discovered that field staff had attempted to let the residents in these areas know that these services were available to them on a case by case basis through door hangers and flyers that field staff would drop off after picking up illegal dumped trash in front of the properties. It was also discovered that the field staff no longer did that, because residents were calling City Police to report suspicious behavior. Residents were actively calling the police on Black City staff. City Staff was obviously uniformed and driving city-marked vehicles, yet residents were still calling police on Black employees. The Black employees stopped delivering door hangers and flyers several years prior to the Staff Analyst report.

The Staff Analyst drafted a comprehensive report with all findings, including racial profiling, and delivered it to the managements. Management redacted and omitted many parts of the report, and ultimately only left the “less politically sensitive” topics from the report. The final council report that was delivered to City Council was a succinct report that demonstrated that increased surveillance would be too costly, and that the City should focus on more outreach. The manners in which the City could leverage contracts was left out. Any mention of race and low-income residents was left out.

The Staff Analyst was a Latino male who had grown up in poverty; was a first-generation immigrant, and non-native English speaker. The lived experiences of Staff Analyst allowed him to create a comprehensive report for the City that explored socio-economic aspects of illegal dumping. While the Staff Analyst may not have directly focused on ensuring that access to services were “equitable” in multi-housing departments just as accessible in the single-family-home areas, the lived experience allowed him to view the issue differently and from a different perspective that focused on education first and enforcement second, if needed.

The decision by City Management to edit and redact parts of the document demonstrated to the Staff Analyst that issues around race were to be ignored even if it directly impacted the way the City should approach the issues. By ignoring “race” and remaining “apolitical” in the report, long-standing issues that were discovered through interviews were once again ignored. The City missed a chance to address an issue that was preventing staff from doing their work. The City missed an opportunity to do more community outreach in those specific areas to build trust within those communities. The City missed the opportunity to make access to the city services equitable.

Case Study: Integrating an Equity Focus into Continuous Improvement Methodologies in Bellevue, Washington

Continuous improvement methodologies have expanded and grown across the public sector. With roots in 1450s Venice, the concept of rigorously thinking about processes was introduced into contemporary times via the work of Henry Ford in the early 1910s and of Kiichiro Toyoda and Taiichi Ohno at Toyota in the 1930s.⁶ This framework was later called Lean, and in the last few decades, public administrators have taken the lessons learned across private industry to develop a modified approach for organizations that aren’t profit-driven. Experts in Lean methodology have pushed for greater application of Lean in a way that centers equity, and for those organizations

⁶ Womack, A. by J. (J., Womack, J. (J., & Lean Enterprise Institute. (2021, August 25). A brief history of lean. Lean Enterprise Institute. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.lean.org/explore-lean/a-brief-history-of-lean/>

that have implemented Lean as a methodology, it offers a pathway towards modernizing local government services in a way that supports justice and equity.

One such jurisdiction is the City of Bellevue, WA, where the Finance & Asset Management Department has been piloting Lean for the past five years. All Lean training courses within this pilot program focus on two key pillars of Lean - respect for people, and continuous improvement of customer value. Both principles easily link to basic principles of equity and justice - that we should have respect for the whole person, that we should never stop in our efforts to improve, and that improvements should meet the needs of customers or communities who engage with our services. For those who are further along in their social justice journeys, making connections comes easily as their process improvements focus on improving outcomes for those most harmed by local government services. For those who are early on in their journeys, however, these principles offer a simple path to begin applying Lean and continuous improvement methodologies to inequities in our systems and services.

The strategy of leveraging the Lean Management System as a vehicle for modernizing service delivery in a way that promotes justice and equity has yielded promising results as the Finance & Asset Management Department looks to 2023. Department leaders embedded diversity, equity, and inclusion into the department's strategic plan, creating a north star that has since allowed workgroups to align items on their work plan to department strategy. Department executives challenged each workgroup to include at least one project on their work plans related to diversity, equity, and inclusion to further solidify this alignment. Examples of this include ramping up a more robust translation program in partnership with the city's ADA/Title VI Administrator after municipal tax employees reviewed letters to businesses to ensure that technical language was not a barrier, or facilities staff evaluating the way that they engage with vendors who provide on-site services, or procurement staff beginning a deeper evaluation into barriers to participation for WMDBE (women, minority, disadvantaged business enterprises) businesses. Though much of this change has come in 2022, the momentum has driven interesting and important process improvements that modernize our services while centering the voices of historically disadvantaged customer groups.

The cross-application of Lean and diversity, equity, and inclusion comes with challenges for every success achieved. In the wake of the civil rights movement of 2020, many public administrators desire structural change to remedy inequities in our systems. Regardless of the level of expertise one has in topics of social equity or justice, public administrators in the field feel intense pressure to process improve entire systems in order to reduce the presence of discrimination or inequities. Staff with less experience in DEI see this as an insurmountable task, which reduces motivation to engage and can ultimately reduce effectiveness. Staff with more experience in DEI often uncover more problems with every process improvement attempt, which, when added to the already full plates most employees have, can accelerate burnout and reduce engagement. Leaders and champions of this work must ensure that their staff have opportunities to build their knowledge base as they embark on this work, and should offer guidance and support in prioritizing and scoping process improvement efforts to ensure that these challenges are mitigated in implementation. Both Lean and DEI are cultural frameworks for driving change and improvement, so ensuring that public administrators do not over-emphasize the technical side of this work is key to changing culture and building habits that promote equity and justice.

Solutions

Many local governments across the country are energized and working towards promoting social equity and justice for the communities they serve. As we have explored the challenges and the ways this shows up in the work of Administrative Services professionals, we have identified a few key themes that require broader discussion by the profession. There is no silver bullet that will address all of the previously identified challenges to modernize in favor of social equity and justice, though public administrators should deploy a few strategies to begin moving away from the systems that produce the inequities experienced by historically excluded groups.

Public administration is both young and growing as a field, and as demonstrated by the data and experiences outlined above, continuous education is of paramount importance to equipping administrators with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the moment. The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) should work with institutions and with public administrators to promote continuous education through graduation and beyond. With the landscape of the profession changing rapidly, administrators cannot afford to stop learning upon receiving their degrees – in order to meet the moment that many government agencies are embarking upon, BPA and MPA graduates must be equipped with a thorough understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion. Ensuring that foundation is imparted onto future public administrators will allow them to fulfill their moral obligation to promote equity and justice, thereby delivering on a key component of the radical model of inclusive governance.

Current practitioners in public administration must seek out opportunities to connect with and learn from others about issues of social equity and justice. The Municipal Research and Services Center, a Seattle-based non-profit that specializes in research and consultation with local governments, offers a collection of resources related to DEI programming across Washington State.⁷ This includes statements and ordinances, strategic plans and policies, DEI data analytics reports, and equity toolkits developed by various agencies throughout the state, which gives practitioners examples to build off of in their own organizations. With access to specific examples of DEI operationalized in local governments' practices, working public administrators may not necessarily need to return to school before modernizing local government through equity-based initiatives.

Regardless of one's tenure in the field of public administration, continuous improvement of our public institutions must continue to progress. As demonstrated with the case study from Bellevue, WA, many agencies are already equipped to operationalize their core values through promoting a culture of equity-focused continuous improvement. Taking the first step to make small improvements today can yield larger improvements down the line as the organization's culture shifts. Understanding this shift and the outputs of improvement efforts will require robust data and metrics, another key component of the radical model of inclusive governance that will be explored in the next section.

Data-Driven Community and Public Services

Based on NAPA Grand Challenge - Utilize Data and Available Metrics

Issues and Challenges

Promoting and actively engaging with their core values is central to building a new model for inclusive governance. However, policymaking and administrative decisions must be informed by both their values and data. Local governments often engage in the practice of strategic planning and performance-based budgeting, but those two strategies are rarely aligned. The second tenet of the modern inclusive governance model for local governments is to build and incorporate data into decision-making practices.

Throughout the last few decades, data and the use of data has become more prevalent in government agencies across the United States and across the world. Although these efforts have revolutionized the landscape for effectiveness, efficiency, and fully understanding the implications of policy efforts, data-based decision-making is still not the norm throughout government. The modern political environment promotes misinformation and

⁷ Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington (MRSC). (n.d.). Ask MRSC. Municipal Research and Services Center . Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Governance/Engagement/Diversity-Equity-Inclusion.aspx>

disinformation and puts additional pressure on data analysis to promote inclusivity in their decision-making processes. Because of these dynamics, it is critical to properly incorporate and utilize data-driven decision-making to modernize the inclusive governance structure.

Certain industries have created pockets of data governance and standards internationally. The most notable is the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). ISO is an independent, non-governmental organization that provides standards in a variety of industries including environmental, health and safety, food safety, and IT security.⁸ Despite some preexisting data-driven standards, there does not appear to be practical applications for the collection and distribution of data related to these standards. Therefore, broader collaboration is needed at the international level – especially in regard to key statistical indicators like gross domestic product (GDP) and consumer price index (CPI).⁹ Organizations like the World Bank are working to address these global challenges through reports like the recent “World Development Reports: Data for Better Lives.”¹⁰ The World Bank highlights the need for a new social contract for data that organizations would realize the value of data, trust the stakeholders involved, and share resources equitably so that the benefits of data can be seen universally. Although valiant in theory, there has yet to be practical application and proof of concept for these efforts in the field.

Unlike the more comprehensive approaches to data at the international levels, states and local governments are much more scattered. Each state has varying policies and infrastructure of data and expectations for data-based decision-making. As of early 2022, “forty-six states have some form of an open data portal, (but) they vary considerably in the type and amount of information they provide.”¹¹ The same study found that only 16 states have open data laws. Although open data provides a level of transparency to the public, the datasets may be incomplete, outdated, or unusable in certain circumstances. Although states have enough autonomy to decide the level and depth of their data-based decision-making efforts, the international and national trends of focusing efforts more strategically are clearly making an impact on programs and policies across the United States. Local governments within these states have limited funds to invest in broad open-data infrastructure, making their policies often determined by the state in which they happen to reside.

In 2016, the Pew Charitable Trusts interviewed leaders in all fifty states to determine how they were using data. The result is a report, *How States Use Data to Inform Decisions*, which highlights traditional uses of data – in the form of annual reports demonstrating how funds were spent and when performance measures tie directly to compliance from the Federal government or other agencies. Unfortunately, “innovative uses of administrative data remain relatively rare” due to budget pressures, data quality, lack of information sharing, and the day-to-day grind of efforts.¹² Although there are some great examples of analytical efforts undertaken in various states, it is the exception and not the rule. Unfortunately, the data situation is much more challenging at the local level.

⁸ ISO. (2021, February 19). ISO Standards. ISO. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.iso.org/standards.html>

⁹ World Bank Blogs. (2021). Not all data are created equal: Why the adoption of International Data Standards Pays Off. World Bank Blogs. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/not-all-data-are-created-equal-why-adoption-international-data-standards-pays>

¹⁰ Bank, W. (2021, March 24). *World development report 2021*. Open Knowledge Repository. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35218>

¹¹ Greenberg, P. (2022, January 25). *State Open Data Laws and Policies*. National Conference of State Legislatures. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.ncsl.org/research/telecommunications-and-information-technology/state-open-data-laws-and-policies.aspx>

¹² PEW Trusts. (n.d.). *How states use data to inform decisions* - pewtrusts.org. PEW Trusts. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2018/02/dasa_how_states_use_data_report_v5.pdf

Similar to national and state challenges, the political will of using data is often much more controversial than it should be. Sometimes the ‘easier’ decision for a program is made without a fully informed decision. For elected officials, this could be due to a number of reasons - the political landscape, ties to their party, a vocal minority of constituents, or a perception that is not often grounded in truth. This may mean decisions are made with misinformation or just a general unwillingness to be informed. One only has to look to the recent COVID-19 pandemic to see countless examples throughout the country in which the politicization of data did not drive the decision-making process.

Another additive challenge of data-driven decision making is ensuring that trust exists – between the public at-large, those charged with making decisions, and the local government staff supplying the information. If people in the community do not trust the information or data coming from their local government, do they even believe the information? If there isn’t trust, are people apathetic? An annual Chapman University poll of Americans indicates that people aren’t trusting or apathetic – they are fearful. For the sixth year in a row, the Chapman University Poll of America’s Top Fears has ‘corrupt government officials’ at the top of its list with 79.6% of respondents stating they are very afraid or afraid.¹³ How can data – and further data-driven decision-making be respected and supported if the people who the government seek to support are afraid?

Even when local governments are making decisions based on data, it is often not comprehensive. Data may be cherry-picked to uphold expectations or perceptions – without the full data picture being painted. This confirmation bias can become very problematic as it is the tendency of people to take new data or evidence and support their already existing thoughts, without regard for objectivity. A recent study by Cambridge University tested whether the overwhelming amount of information available in the world today upholds or represses existing confirmation biases. The study overwhelmingly indicated that when people are subject to a large amount of information, like we all are in the 21st century, they have a much stronger confirmation bias.¹⁴ When thinking about the impact of confirmation biases in local governments – whether from elected officials, staff, community stakeholders, businesses, or residents – the more likely data may not be as objective as one would hope. This reality can be especially difficult to manage when decisions are perceived as small or insignificant, but eventually have much larger implications that are rooted or have vestiges in past inequitable policies and practices.

Case Study: The Practices - Applications of Federal Data Policy on Local Government Administrative Services

Local governments can draw some insights from the federal government’s data-related efforts. The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Public Law No. 115-435), “requires all agencies of the federal government to appoint a chief data officer, and to undertake actions to modernize their data capabilities with the expectation of achieving data-driven decision making across the federal government.”¹⁵ Although the effort to establish these positions and support data exists throughout federal agencies, there are significant challenges that must be overcome. In a 2022 survey of Federal Chief Data Officers, most respondents indicated lack of direct funding, cultural barriers, limited staff skills/hiring, and data governance challenges were the greatest obstacles they

¹³ Amirazizi, R. (2022). America’s Top Fears 2020/2021. Babbie Center | The Earl Babbie Research Center | Chapman University. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.chapman.edu/wilkinson/research-centers/babbie-center/index.aspx>

¹⁴ Goette, L., Han, H.-J., & Leung, B. T. K. (n.d.). INFORMATION OVERLOAD AND CONFIRMATION BIAS. Apollo Home. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/>

¹⁵ Bean, Randy (2022). How the U.S. Federal Government is Mobilizing to Enable Data-Driven Decision Making. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/randybean/2022/06/01/how-the-us-federal-government-is-mobilizing-to-enable-data-driven-decision-making/?sh=20acbba072db>

faced in supporting the agency’s mission.¹⁶ Though the political will is for data-based decision making, very few medium and small sized agencies even have key performance indicators (KPIs).¹⁷

The Federal emphasis on leveraging data, although still early in its maturity, has evolved quickly. The Practices, a federal tool created by government and non-government stakeholders, “represent aspirational, actionable goals that, when fully realized, will continually challenge and guide agencies, practitioners, and policymakers to improve the government’s approach to data stewardship and to leveraging data to create value.”¹⁸ Summarized in three major categories, the Practices seek to build a data culture in federal agencies that govern and manage data as well as promote efficient data use. The annual Federal Data Strategy Action Plans provide regular, yearly updates on the lessons learned and challenges in implementation – including the diversity of needs, resources, and missions of agencies, the lack of published guidance, and the need for statutory requirements to maintain compliance.¹⁹ The comprehensive approach that the Federal government is taking to amplify the need and role of including data in the decision-making process is clearly a valuable application. A continued commitment to these action items must be part of future administrations if real progress will actually be achieved.

Case Study: Why We Can’t Find “What Works” in American Cities

According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2012, there are over 89,000 local governments in the United States – including 37,000 special districts, 20,000 municipalities, 16,000 townships, 13,000 school districts, and 3,000 counties.²⁰ With varying laws, regulations, and norms within each of the fifty states, the 89,000 local governments are all very different. Among these governments, there are no standards for general practices, let alone data collection, quality assurance, and using data to drive decision-making processes. Due to resource constraints and value and cultural differences, very few local governments are professionally connected for their data efforts. This has not stopped professional organizations from attempting to standardize these practices through international certifications and recognitions.

The International City/County Management Association’s (ICMA) certificate in performance management has existed for roughly ten years and seeks to “recognize programs that instill a culture of performance management, pursue comparative analysis and data-informed decision-making, and promote transparency.”²¹ Similar to groups like the Baldrige Foundation, ICMA’s recognition program was designed to promote cross-governmental alignment in practices without state or federal mandates. Despite the international pull of ICMA, as of 2021, only 56 local governments received this voluntary certification.

Bloomberg Philanthropies created another recognition program with the same goal. Bloomberg’s What Works Cities Certification, “recognizes and celebrates local governments for their exceptional use of data to inform

¹⁶ Federal CDO Council. (2022, July 17). *Chief Data Officer Council 2022 Survey and Results*. Federal CDO Council . Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.cdo.gov/news/survey-results-2022/>

¹⁷ CDO. (n.d.). Survey response statistics - CDO. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.cdo.gov/assets/documents/CDO-Survey-2022-Analysis.pdf>

¹⁸ Federal Data Strategy. (n.d.). *Practices - Federal Data strategy*. Federal Data Strategy. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://strategy.data.gov/practices/>

¹⁹ Federal Data Strategy 2021 action plan. (2021). Retrieved October 28, 2022, from <https://strategy.data.gov/assets/docs/2021-Federal-Data-Strategy-Action-Plan.pdf>

²⁰ US Census Bureau Public Information Office. (2016, May 19). Census Bureau reports there are 89,004 local governments in the United States - governments - newsroom - U.S. Census Bureau. United States Census Bureau. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/governments/cb12-161.html>

²¹ ICMA. (n.d.). Certificates in performance management. ICMA. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://icma.org/certificates-in-performance-management>

policy and funding decisions, improve services, create operational efficiencies, and engage residents.”²² Bloomberg’s significant financial power was not enough to overcome local government fragmentation where, similar to the ICMA Certifications, only 55 cities have received this designation from What Works Cities. Why have these organizations struggled to find something that works?

Exploring why local governments are not more committed to data-driven decision making reveals a number of challenges – some of which are consistent with federal and state policies. As with most government programs, there are limited resources that can be allocated to data-driven decision-making. For example, if a local government needs to allocate funding for a new staff position and must decide between a direct service provider like a sanitation worker and a data analyst, the decision is often made more with results that people can easily see. Additionally, the skill-sets needed to have an effective data management program is often one that requires advanced statistical knowledge, higher education, and a more significant financial investment. Even when local governments have knowledgeable staff, there are often many challenges that are not easily overcome.

One of the most difficult and fundamental barriers to data-driven decision-making is in establishing systems that provide for good data that is grounded in data governance policies. Understanding all the data that an organization collects, how it collects that information, and implementing the checks and balances to make sure that data is accurate and consistent is difficult, expensive, and often not perceived to have significant enough return on investment. Even when these data governance policies exist, often there are antiquated CRM/ERP systems that may not uphold more modern data collection efforts. This is a universal challenge for all organizations – both public and private. In a 2022 study of data management decision-makers in North America by Forrester (commissioned by Capital One):

Seventy-eight percent of decision-makers cite a lack of data cataloging as a top challenge. Without data cataloging, decisionmakers struggle to understand what data they have, how the data is used, and who owns the data. This leads to other key challenges, such as poor data quality (80%), difficulty understanding data (76%), and a lack of data observability (74%).²³

With so many organizations struggling to understand their own data, it is difficult to see how data is then being used to enhance the performance and efficiency of programs. One of the most complicated issues, however, is even more difficult to manage – even with great data governance.

Solutions

Despite all of these challenges – staffing and appropriate skill sets, inconsistencies with data governance, political interference, lack of trust, and confirmation biases – there is yet hope for data-driven decision-making in government and building a modernized governance structure. To begin, local governments must address cultural issues fighting against data-driven policymaking to earn buy-in at every level of the organization. With this cultural shift, every front-line worker is collecting data – and the more standardized and consistent they are with their processes, the more reliable the data is altogether. Managers and department directors should provide data as the basis for any budget proposal or program. Additional support staff must be allocated to help do quality assurance on data and support more analytically based projects. If governments want to truly harness the benefits of having data-informed decisions, they have to allocate funding and resources. Although it can feel overwhelming, organizations can start small.

²² Bloomberg Philanthropies. (n.d.). Build a Government Residents Can Count On. What Works Cities. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://whatworkscities.bloomberg.org/>

²³ Forrester. (2022, May). Data Management Trends: Capital One Software. Capital One. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.capitalone.com/software/resources/data-management-trends/>

Perhaps more critically, data-driven policymaking must be ingrained into the values and practices of the organization. Oftentimes, as Administrative Services professionals, we often see cultures reject strategic planning as an effort undertaken every few years by a consultant who gives an organization a shiny document. Unfortunately, without dedication from the staff and elected officials to the plan, it doesn't actually get used. When organizations make strategic planning part of their day-to-day operations, it makes progress much easier. Data-based decision-making can become a value that is set as the expectation – an agreement between the elected officials and those doing the work - that everyone supports being objective in using data as the foundation for all programs. This means including data metrics and analytics in both what is proposed to elected officials and ultimately what is approved in the form of budget allocations, program deployments, and process evaluations. A continual commitment to upholding data ideals is paramount if any organization wants their progress to be longstanding.

To build the modern inclusive governance model and align data-driven policymaking systems and social justice and equity programs, local governments must fully invest in the cultures inherent in their values. One of the other ways in which an organization can get started is to support the creation of continuous education initiatives like Denver's Peak Academy. This internally administered, grassroots program, "trains and coaches employees at all levels to improve the way government works" – with foundational exercises and content related to process improvement and data governance basics including data collection, measurement, etc.²⁴ According to the original creator of the program, Brian Elms, "The program is designed to teach employees very simple structured problem solving techniques. And very simple and practical understandings of how data is related to their jobs."²⁵ The culture created from investing in internally run programs like Peak Academy can be seen throughout the country with replica programs in Miami, Florida, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Gilbert, Arizona. Should a program like this become ingrained in the culture of an organization, the power and impact of data-driven decision-making will become the norm and will support the value agreements between staff and elected officials.

Although individual governments may support and uphold data-driven decision-making, a greater emphasis is needed from national organizations to help guide a consistent path forward. Groups like ICMA, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), National Government Association (NGA), National League of Cities (NLC), National Association of Counties (NACo), and other similar organizations, must play a role in spearheading the future of data-driven decision-making. There is no go-to resource for practitioners in the field with regard to the promotion of data, performance management, or data-driven decision-making. Great strides are needed to help governmental organizations, especially at the local level, to create standards of how to measure data across all public sectors. There are fairly consistent performance measures and methodology for certain industries – like water utilities and police, but additional standards should be created for all local government services, including water and sanitation, planning and zoning, and so on.

²⁴ City and County of Denver. (n.d.). About peak. City and County of Denver. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.denvergov.org/Government/Agencies-Departments-Offices/Agencies-Departments-Offices-Directory/Department-of-Finance/Our-Divisions/Budget-Management-Office-BMO/Peak-Performance/Peak-Academy/About>

²⁵ Bloomberg Cities. (2018, September 14). Replicating Denver's Peak Academy: A conversation with Brian Elms. Bloomberg Cities. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://bloombergcities.medium.com/replicating-denvers-peak-academy-a-conversation-with-brian-elms-8a24d5b5be0e>

Empathetic Workforce and People Management

Based on NAPA Grand Challenge - Hiring Individuals to Meaningful Work

Issues and Challenges

Administrative services is, at its core, all about people. Despite lofty ideals and models for inclusive governance, nothing can be put into practice without empowering the right people to be in the right position in our organizations. Social justice values and data-driven decision-making cannot and is not implemented without organizations recruiting, hiring, and retaining public servants to meet the needs of the community.

While an argument can, and should, be made regarding the benefits of a proper work/life balance, the fact remains that more than half of a full-time employee's conscious hours are spent at work. In recognition of the challenges facing administrations with recruiting, retention, and more, the focus must turn to – or at least extensively include – the employee experience. How can local governments increase engagement and connect individuals to meaningful work?

The idea of meaningful work is not a new concept. Charles Walker and Robert Guest studied the way work behavior negated operational efficiencies in 1952. Frederick Herzberg revolutionized the approach to job enrichment in 1966 and again in 1976. The expectancy theory of motivation was outlined by Edward Lawler, Lyman Porter, and Victor Vroom in 1968 and 1964, respectively. Still in use today, with updates from the original authors, the Job Characteristics Theory was created by Greg Oldham and J. Richard Hackman in the late 1970s and early 1980s.²⁶

Today, meaningful work is usually defined as when the employee “perceives [their] work as being worthwhile, important, or valuable.”²⁷ Since what is defined as meaningful will vary based on the perceptions and experiences of each individual person, our challenge becomes how do we individualize meaning to each employee while also offering broader services to the community at-large. To tie this back, if meaning is an individualized concept based on perceptions and lived experience then a successful model of inclusive governance is intrinsically tied to the engagement of the local government workforce. That said, without an inclusive workforce there cannot be inclusive governance, but local government workforces have typically failed to reflect the communities they represent. While women make up 50.8% of the United States population, they account for only 25.8% of department head leadership positions within local governments.²⁸

Local government HR managers are faced with a reality in which recruiting and training talent, succession planning, and staff development are the most important issues facing municipal governments. The recruiting and hiring of employees have become one of the most challenging aspects of local government. Searches online will show the massive number of vacancies in municipal organizations without regard to the size or demographic of the organization. A decade ago, we heard of a phenomenon called the Silver Tsunami. Analysts warned of the coming

²⁶ Oldham, G. R., & Hackman, J. R. (1970, January 1). Not what it was and not what it will be: The Future of Job Design Research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:5339439>

²⁷ Fraser-Thill, R. (2019, August 7). The 5 biggest myths about meaningful work. *Forbes*. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rebeccafraserthill/2019/08/07/the-5-biggest-myths-about-meaningful-work/?sh=6a530e1970b8>

²⁸ Feeney, M. K., & Camarena, L. (2019). Gender, race, and Diversity Values among local government leaders. *Gender, Race, and Diversity Values Among Local Government Leaders*. Retrieved October 28, 2022, from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0734371X19865009>

decade where large numbers of experienced and senior level leaders would leave the job force, as well as the public sector. The Silver Tsunami is upon us as city managers, assistant city managers, and department heads have left local government in large numbers. It could be due to better opportunities from the private sector, overall burn out, or retirement but, we have a serious need to fill these positions.

Furthermore, the Great Resignation has caused a void in staffing throughout the public sector. People are choosing themselves and their families before their careers and their motivations are valid. A bigger focus has emerged on self-care and the need to take care of one's emotional and mental health and well-being. The standard 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM work day is inflexible and does not allow for a work/life balance. Over time, an inflexible schedule can cause emotional distress. While the private sector has moved to hybrid and remote working conditions, this cannot be said for local governments. The private sector has become the engine for ingenuity and innovation. Recently, Starbucks has ensured benefits that cover infertility treatment for their full-time and part-time staff.²⁹ Most low-income and medium-income persons cannot afford in vitro treatment and put off starting a family which may cause a desire to leave their employer for the chance of an opportunity that provides more pay and more health benefits.

Case Study - Paid Family Leave as a Recruiting Mechanism

The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally altered many of our beliefs about the workforce. From the power and benefit of a hybrid or remote work schedule to the necessity for flexible benefits and health programs, local governments have been forced to contend with the new reality of the changing workforce. However, the need for change in how local governments treat their people has long predated the COVID-19 pandemic.

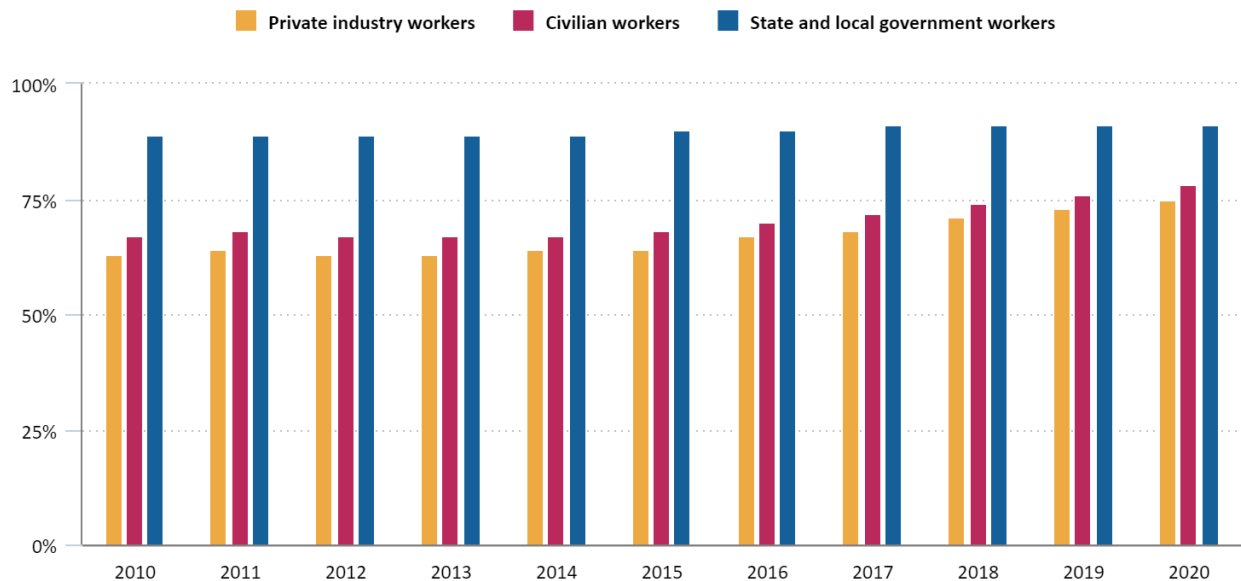
Back in the 1990s, the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) in 1993 was the first opportunity for many across the country to realize the real-world impacts of sickness and health in the workplace. Prior to FMLA, many employees would be threatened with discipline, punished, or outright fired for taking time off to take care of their own or their family-member's health conditions. FMLA provided a job-protection guarantee to help reassure employees of their job security during dramatic life events, but it did nothing to supplement the costs of missing work for extended periods of time. The lack of federal mandate for paid sick and medical leave became an acute reality during the COVID-19 pandemic. With employees getting sick at incredible rates and government-mandated quarantine periods before returning to work, many organizations suddenly reckoned with this reality.

Despite this reality, many local governments were ahead of this curve, and for good reason. Prior to the pandemic, state and local governments vastly outpaced the private sector in providing paid sick and family leave which allowed them to stay competitive with private sector compensation packages.³⁰ Public sector pay has always struggled to keep up with private sector compensation rates, but for particularly high-skill and specialized positions in technology, planning, and law, pay rates become dramatically different for public and private sector workers. While increasing pay for workers is important, many local governments turned to other compensation to increase their competitiveness, including paid parental and paid family and medical leave packages.

²⁹ Emily_Lorsch. (2022, October 6). Starbucks is helping to cover the cost of fertility treatment for part-time employees. CNBC. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/10/04/how-starbucks-is-helping-thousands-of-women-get-pregnant.html>

³⁰ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). Paid sick leave benefits factsheet. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/factsheet/paid-sick-leave.htm>

Chart 1. Percentage of workers with access to paid sick leave benefits, March 2010 - 2020



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey.



Allegheny County in Pennsylvania created a robust paid parental leave program in 2015 by offering six consecutive weeks of fully compensated leave for all employees welcoming a new child through birth, adoption, or foster-care. This provided the added benefit of allowing both parents to take paid time off while companies can require parents to split FMLA time. Upon passage of this policy, Pittsburgh City Councilperson Natalia Rudiak noted that “...when parents have paid leave to care for new children, they are more likely to remain financially and physically healthy, and they are more likely to return to their work when leave is over.” Allegheny County also paced its private sector colleagues, with only 12% of local private sector employees in the area offering comparable benefits.³¹ The importance of parental leave cannot be understated for necessarily lean and efficient local governments, as the Pennsylvania Institute for Women and Politics at Chatham noted that it can cost 6 to 9 months of salary and productive to replace an employee if they leave or are forced out during life events. Instead, Allegheny County and others have opted to provide a comparatively meager 6 weeks of paid leave to show employees they are supported and encourage them to return to work.³²

Case Study - Talent Pipelines with the Presidential Management Fellowship

Graduate programs provide a direct path for recent graduates to enter public service professions. Two of the most prominent fellowship programs in the United States include the Presidential Management Fellowship Program (PMF) which is federal program designed to attract to the Federal service outstanding men and women from a variety of academic disciplines and career paths who have a clear interest in, and commitment to excellence in the leadership and management of public policies and programs. The program spans the entire Federal government and is administered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

³¹ WTAE . (2017, October 6). Fitzgerald announces paid parental leave benefit for allegheny county employees. Pittsburgh's Action News 4. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.wtae.com/article/fitzgerald-announces-paid-parental-leave-benefit-for-allegheny-county-employees/7470263>

³² Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics. (2014, November). FMLA in PA: A Report on Family and Medical Leave in The State . Chatham University. Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.chatham.edu/centers/pcwp/research/>

The Presidential Management Fellowship Program (PMF) is a two-year federal program which places recent graduates of post-graduate degrees in a full-time, competitively paid fellowship with a federal agency. The PMF was created in 1977 to attract and recruit highly skilled and highly educated people to public service. The program is a success and has inspired public sector industries to create their own respective programs.

In 2004, faced with a large number of vacancies in municipal government, the International City and County Management Association created a program called the Local Government Management Fellowship. The fellowship places recent graduates of the MPA/MPP degree in a full-time management track position where the fellow receives direct mentorship from a senior level staff person and works on high-level analytical assignments. Fellowship lengths vary between one-year or two-years. Several hundred LGMF alumni have become department heads, assistant city managers, and city managers. These programs create a pipeline for recent graduates of post graduate programs. Many municipal governments have hosted a fellow. The ICMA LGMF is beneficial to both the individual and municipality because the program provides a path to a fulfilling job and the organization receives talented, dedicated, and highly educated employees.

Programs like management fellowships are an excellent opportunity to provide real experience to recent graduates as well as provide a path to fill the void of job loss in local government. Another hindrance to employment are minimum requirements that do not logically align with the knowledge, skills, and abilities from these programs. Entry-level jobs requiring multiple years of progressive responsibility are explicitly counterproductive to growing the talent pipeline and generally have the effect of discouraging young workers from joining organizations.

Solution

The continued investment in and development of employees has a significant impact on overall employee engagement and experience. But even more critically is that investment in employees be based on those employees as human beings with empathy. What development looks like in local government can depend greatly on the specific department, the work being done, the size of the municipality in question, and even on the specific region where the employee works. Because of these nuances, it is difficult to standardize content or even best practices for development industry-wide.

ICMA, while the largest and most accepted professional organization for public administration, focuses their development programs and credentialing primarily towards current or future top administrators. Finance, human resources, engineering, and others must look to a combination of public and private focused organizations to continue their development and earn job specific credentials. Human resources professionals, for example, must navigate between no less than three different organizations. Two of these organizations, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the HR Certification Institute (HRCI), are heavily geared towards work in the private sector. Only one, the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR), caters to professionals in the public sector. All three organizations offer similarly titled certifications for both junior and senior HR practitioners. Making things more complicated, municipalities don't agree on which certification is preferred, forcing employees to potentially go through the time and expense to study for, earn, and continually recertify three separate certifications. In higher population municipalities where departments may be larger and employees more specialized, additional credentials specifically focused on benefits, compensation, or recruiting might be required as well.

Offering additional paid family leave, paid medical leave, paid parental leave, and health insurance benefits for public employees is a great incentive in recruiting and staffing. Additionally, some local governments have lowered or removed the waiting period for employees to begin health insurance and this provides another incentive

in recruiting. Removing the waiting period for health benefits may also benefit the organization as it provides early access to preventive medicine which has cost-savings benefits for both the organization and the employee. However, most municipal governments do not offer health benefits to their part-time employees.

Moving forward, we must also retain employees through innovative and equitable practices. Still today women make only 83 cents for every dollar a man makes, and the gap grows when race is considered. For example, the average Black woman makes 58 cents for every dollar earned by the average white male per the latest U.S. Census data.³³ September 21st is Black Women's Equal Pay Day, but neither the private nor public sector has made a push to ensure black women receive their fair pay. This gives local government the opportunity to be the change-maker and innovator who is willing to combat systemic and institutional racism through the creation of equitable pay scales.

Call to Action – Embracing the Inclusive Governance Model

For local governments to adapt to the rapidly changing professional environment, they cannot neglect the core element of administrative services - people. Our model addresses three of the most central concerns facing 'people' in local government administration: equity in the workforce and in process development; data-driven decision-making models; and, people-centric, empathetic workforce management. These issues combined represent the biggest challenge facing local government in the future, a problem that presents an existential threat to the public servants meeting the needs of the community. If local governments cannot better support the people in their organizations, trust in government will continue to wane and the already thin talent pipeline will continue to shrink.

Our model for inclusive governance is built on our expertise as administrative service professionals. However, more importantly, it is built on our perspectives as young, passionate local government employees who care deeply about the way that local government organizations are structured, how those organizations meet their community's needs, and how their employees are treated. This model creates an interplay between values, data, and people that is centrally missing from traditional models of local government administration. Over the past century, the field of public administration has evolved, as has its applicability to administrators in local government. However, those evolutions - from Wilson's politics-administration dichotomy in the early 1900s to the human resources evolution spurred by studies such as Hawthorne in the mid-century to the New Public Management movement of the 1990s - have failed to fully address social justice and equity, data analytics, and empathetic human services.

The three applicable recommendations in response to these challenges fundamentally restructures the traditional way that local governments have made decisions and operated. In combination, this model brings local governments from laggards to leaders on issues of social justice, data-driven decision-making, and empathetic human services.

1. Local governments should adopt a social-justice-based model of continuous process improvement. Many local governments are energized to address issues of social justice. However, if these efforts are to be truly institutionalized, they need to be embedded into the processes governing organizations. Many organizations, like Denver's Peak Academy, have formalized divisions and centers that lead process improvement efforts. By linking in data, information, and recommendations from diversity, equity, and inclusion groups, organizations can truly act on their values
2. Local governments should join intergovernmental and international organizations that build and manage open data sites. This requires a commitment from individual local governments, but greater emphasis should be placed on the role of open data from international institutions such as the International City and County Managers Association (ICMA). By embracing data-driven decision-making, organizations will empower

³³ Black Women & The Pay Gap. AAUW. (2022, September 20). Retrieved October 27, 2022, from <https://www.aauw.org/resources/article/black-women-and-the-pay-gap/>

individuals to take on structural issues in their organizations that may have had disproportionately impacted historically excluded groups.

3. Local governments should adopt empathetic, people-first policies that will recruit, hire, and empower employees. These policies see employees as individual people with unique identities, backgrounds, and experiences, and then empower those employees to take down traditional power structures in their organizations. These policies can include anything from robust and easily accessible health benefits to creating succession planning to better support individuals from historically excluded groups.

With these three changes, the structures of civic centers, city halls, and administration buildings across the country will change. Local governments should embed their values into their processes, and empower those individuals to take on those challenges through robust data and empathetic people services.

From an administrative services perspective, it is not just critical, but existential, for local governments to modernize and reinvigorate public service. This modernization is a foundational, radical shift to the way that local governments think about public service. It is not time to ignore values, exclude people, and ignore data trends. Instead, it is time to embrace values of social justice and challenge institutional barriers to access such as process improvement, open data, and structural inequality.

To get there, it involves cultural change, both from individual organizations but also from the field of public administration at-large. As a key connective piece between administrators and practitioners, the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) can help facilitate that change. The primary focus of this reinvigoration involves capturing the passion of young public servants who may be driven to work in local government to serve their communities. MPA and MPPA programs are teaching future leaders to adhere religiously to political impartiality. The consequence is that when those who benefit from the current power structure frame issues of social justice, open data, and empathetic people services as ‘political’, administrators are unwilling to touch those issues. This is not tenable in the short or long terms. Administrators should not engage in politics, but they should feel empowered to implement and advance their organization’s values and build more equitable systems. These can be mutually exclusive.

If we continue to allow those benefiting from the current power structure to dictate how administrators respond to issues of political import, then the power dynamic will never change. Modernizing public service means to shift power dynamics, embrace the employees who serve their communities, and challenge processes, procedures, and programs that reinforce existing power imbalances. Local governments must make change central to their organization and empower employees of any background to best serve their communities.

Glossary

1. Data-based decision making - using accurate and complete metrics and data points to inform and support business decisions and goals
2. Empathetic workforce management - Supporting the hiring and career advancement of employees from various demographic groups that uphold the values of social equity and justice
3. Historically excluded/historically marginalized/historically disadvantaged - communities who have historically faced exclusion, marginalization or disadvantage due to laws, policies and practices implemented by government and society
4. Inclusive Governance - a model whereby all people of every demographic group are engaged, supported, and involved in the government's processes and services
5. Lean Management System - a process improvement system that seeks to enhance the value a process creates through minimizing waste, all while centering respect for the people doing the work.
6. Modernize - as highlighted through the NAPA grand challenges, an effort for the government to evolve and adapt to the rapidly changing nature of public service and the challenges being faced today
7. Open data - an effort to provide datasets to the public for enhanced transparency and public oversight
8. Silver Tsunami - a term used to summarize the large number of Baby Boomers (born between 1946 to 1964) who are preparing to retire in the next few years - many of whom are in organizational leadership positions
9. Social Equity - ensuring that the systematic disparities between various demographic groups do not result in unfair treatment, access, or opportunity