



The Art of Public Service: The Communication Continuum

February 1, 2023



Background

The Art of Public Service: The Communication Continuum is the result of merging three initiatives devised during the *Local Government 2030* convening in Omaha, Nebraska, November 4-5, 2022.

Goals and Objectives

This initiative seeks to reimagine the way local governments approach the art of communication. Communication is a key skill for the success of all team members across an organization. While the term communication may evoke images of community outreach, this initiative posits that the approach should be turned on its head, before a quality public engagement effort can even exist, local government employees need training, coaching and resources to prepare for meaningful engagements with the community. This starts with training on Emotional Intelligence and other “soft” individual skills and grows from there.

It is the hope that this initiative will help local governments improve and increase their communication and engagement efforts with their local communities in meaningful ways, beyond the walls of government buildings. The goal is to reshape the current best practices around community engagement, beginning with a scalable model that can be shared throughout all professions in local governments, not just professional communications teams.

The purpose of this project is to define what it means to engage a community. With a clear focus and definition, it will allow the team to use current resources, as well as new ideas and approaches, to re-shape the best practices, tailoring them in a way to be incorporated in the work of all local government employees. Beginning at the employee level will help change typical engagement practices and help meet the community where they are at, to provide the essential feedback to help allocate finite resources.

Prepare a Gap Analysis

Currently there are many resources, handbooks, guides and best practices for how to engage the public as a local government as well as sources from community organizing agencies and nonprofits. The team endeavors to review and compile these resources, noting similarities and highlighting the gaps missing from these resources. This work will shape the guidebook that is prepared. Part of this work includes a survey of local government professionals to understand the level of awareness and implementation of this existing material.

Develop a Curriculum of Staff Training for Local Government Professionals

Develop, through the assistance of other professionals, a curriculum of suggested staff trainings for local government professionals focused on social and emotional intelligence. This is intended to be designed for all employees with the concept that anyone and everyone can benefit from this work as they engage with their colleagues and also the community. The team will prepare some initial ideas with resources already published and accessible but will seek the assistance of academics and consultants to develop a training that can be deployed throughout organizations of varying size and structures.

Identify Partners and Resources

The success of Local Government 2030 would not have been possible without the organizing committee and countless professional development organizations that supported the goals of the convening. It is hoped that the work of this group can be shared outwardly to communicate the needs of local government and inspire innovation from groups providing communication services and platforms.

Identify Cohort of Local Governments to Test and Pilot Resources

The final objective for this initiative would be to identify a cohort of local governments willing to test and pilot the guidebook and resources that have been created. This portion of the project will likely extend beyond the second convening but is essential to ensure that the guidebook and resources prepared are useful and meaningful for local governments.

Timeline

February 2023	Complete literature review
March 2023	Respond to literature review, begin gap analysis Begin ideas and concepts for workbook
April 2023	Prepare for May presentation to interested partners
May 2023	Meeting to present and engage interest parties and partner organizations
June 2023	Meeting – prepare for dialogue, edits, feedback to pivot as necessary based on May meeting
July 2023	Finalize gap analysis and present for feedback Present initial ideas from committees to group as a whole
August 2023	Break out into committees to begin work on the final resource
September 2023	Check-in meeting
October 2023	Present draft components to the team as a whole
November 2023	Present deliverable to Local Gov 2030 full delegates
December 2023	Identify key partners or organizations for feedback Identify cohort of local governments willing to test the resource
January 2024	Prepare update for 2 nd Convening
February 2024	Re-group to finalize edits based on feedback

Team

The team working on this initiative includes the following 15 delegates:

Lisa Brown	Rockhill, SC
Danielle Burke	Garden City, KS
Kevin Fitzgerald	Groton, CT
Taylor Galusha	Shewbury, MA
Amanda Graor	Mid-America Regional Council, MO
Phil Green	Hoffman Estates, IL
Lisa Henty	Fauquier County, VA
Trevor Hogan	Rockford, IL
Krystle Lindberg	Providence, RI
Dale Markey-Crimp	Issaquah, WA
Josh Morgan	Danville, KY
Stephanie Prindle	Warrensburg, MO
Lauren Rose	Sachse, TX
Alex Sanchez	Pitkin County, CO
Derrick Stanford	Coppell, TX

Coaches

The team is supported by the following advisors:

- Aaron Deslatte, Assistant Professor, Indiana University
- Talia Lomax O'dneal, Deputy Finance Director, Nashville, TN
- Craig Owens, City Manager, Lawrence, KS
- Sue Schwartz, Planning Director, Greensboro, NC