Without strong local institutions and motivated staff, decentralization and human settlements reform will not deliver the desired development outcomes. Yet, many local authorities and civil society organisations lack the human resources required to meet urgent needs. Training and capacity building is therefore a wise investment into the future sustainability of our cities. The Training and Capacity Building Branch (TCBB) of UN-HABITAT supports national training institutions to build their capacity to implement innovative programmes, focusing on local governance and sustainable human settlements development. Typical activities include training needs assessment, development of manuals, training of trainers, and impact evaluation. TCBB products have been successfully adapted and translated into over 20 languages.

Concepts and Strategies is the third Volume of the Local Elected Leadership (LEL) series on Key Competencies for Improving Local Governance. The series presents two roles and ten competencies essential for every local elected official and is comprised of Volume 1 – Quick Guide; Volume 2 – User's Guide; Volume 3 – Concepts and Strategies; and Volume 4 – Training Tools. Volume 3 provides the conceptual framework and theoretical background, including the concepts, principles and strategies, for each of the two roles and ten competencies for effective leadership that are covered in the series. It is intended to provide users with an understanding, including through definition, of these key leadership competencies and their relationship with good urban governance principles. This Volume has included questions that allow users, readers and trainers to reflect on key points while navigating through the various concepts and ideas. Key points are summarised at the end of each role and competency to enhance understanding and applicability.

The Local Elected Leadership Series

Key Competencies for Improving Local Governance

Volume 3: Concepts and Strategies

UN-HABITAT

Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative

Designed and printed in Nairobi by the United Nations Office at Nairobi

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Local Government
and Public Service
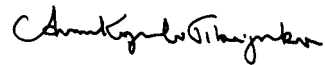Reform Initiative

Open Society Institute

Foreword

One of the most successful UN-HABITAT initiatives to increase the capacity of local governments, their leaders, and many other key local stakeholders worldwide has been through the efforts of its Training and Capacity Building Branch (TCBB). Through the development and dissemination of practical training materials and the training of trainers, TCBB has been able to extend its reach and influence to public officials and communities with the desire and commitment to improve and promote good local governance. More importantly, these user-friendly learning tools have opened the door for an increasing number of women to join the ranks of public officials who can leverage their communities resources to fight poverty and bring about positive changes in their governing institutions. Among these tools is the Elected Leadership series.

UN-HABITAT first developed and published the Local Elected Leadership series a decade ago, and the series enjoyed a wide success in many regions of the world through numerous training programmes and has been translated into more than twenty-five languages over the years. We expect that this new Local Elected Leadership series will establish new benchmarks of service to local governments and their leaders because of a network of trainers and training institutions that already exists. Their dedication and commitment to elected leadership development is legendary. Without their efforts, it would be impossible to reach around the world with the learning opportunities that are embodied in this series.

This work significantly contributes to the Global Campaign on Urban Governance, which was launched by UN-HABITAT in 1999 to support implementation of the Habitat Agenda goal of "sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world." The Campaign's goal is to contribute to the eradication of poverty through the improvement of urban governance. There is growing consensus that the quality of urban governance is the single most important factor for the eradication of poverty and for prosperous cities. Based on this consensus, the Campaign has focused on contributing to the capacity of local governments and other stakeholders so they can fully implement good governance initiatives.

There are so many to thank in the accomplishment of this project: the financial support through funding from the Government of the Netherlands and the Open Society Institute; the expert committee that took time to share their thoughts and wisdom, the hundred of trainers who contributed to a better understanding of how to strengthen the series; the team of UN-HABITAT professionals who guided the project and products to fruition; and the principal authors of the series, Dr. Fred Fisher and David Tees.

Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

Preface

First published in 1994, the initial edition of this Local Elected Leadership (LEL) series has been translated into twenty-five languages and used in many regions of the world. Hundreds of trainers worldwide have been trained to facilitate elected leadership workshops and several hundred thousand local elected and appointed officials have participated in leadership programmes using the materials. In addition, the LEL series has been used by hundreds of non-governmental and community-based organizations to strengthen their management and leadership skills and competencies.

Based on the success of the original series and the changing nature of local governance, urban challenges, and the growing wisdom and understanding about issues like governance and sustainability, UN-HABITAT decided to revise and update the LEL series to meet the learning needs of a new generation of local elected leaders. A global written survey of users was conducted and a representative team of elected officials, trainers, and governance specialists was convened at UN-HABITAT headquarters in late 2002 to review the survey data, reflect on their own experiences in using the original series, review the materials in-depth to determine how best to improve on them, and reach consensus on a comprehensive list of recommended actions that should be taken to revise the materials based on changing times and growing demand.

Several factors dictated the development of this new series of local elected leadership materials.

❑ There was confirmation that the roles and responsibilities covered by the initial series were, in large part, still valid. The basic competencies required of elected officials to perform leadership roles within their jurisdictions have not changed.

❑ While the basic competencies may not have changed, the need for greater depth of understanding about these competencies and the skills to apply them had grown in the intervening years. The world is much more complex and the challenges of local elected leadership more demanding that they were a decade or so ago.

❑ Reservoir of valuable experience about governance, elected leadership, and the issues confronting local leaders in today's complex urban environments has been growing over the last decade.
It was time to tap this reservoir of experience and knowledge as resources for significant elected leadership learning and development.

❑ Finally, there has been a profound shift in the understanding of what constitutes good governance and

effective elected leadership over the past decade or so. Issues of equity, inclusion, subsidiarity, civic engagement, accountability, transparency, and the old standards of effectiveness and efficiency, have gained new significance, understanding, and importance as elected leadership mandates and criteria for measuring governance performance.

Based on these factors and the wisdom of all those who helped contribute to this new series, there are several key changes that mark this new series.

❑ It recognizes representation and leadership as the core roles and responsibilities of the elected official. They must represent their constituents and they must provide leadership in their representation. Both of these roles are complex and demanding.

❑ In order to fulfill these core roles and responsibilities, the elected leader must be knowledgeable and skilled in the following competencies: communicating, facilitating, using power, decision making, policy making, enabling, negotiating, financing, overseeing, and institution building.

❑ These competencies must be exercised within the principles of good governance as defined by international standards. These principles establish the context within which each of the competency skills should be applied.

❑ The roles of trainer and training manager are recognized as central to the success of elected leadership development. An extensive User's Guide has been developed to support their initiatives. In addition, nearly ninety individual training and governance tools are available to assist them in designing relevant experiential learning experiences based on the needs of their learning constituents.

We hope users will find this new series most enriching.

Fred Fisher and David Tees
Principal Authors

Acknowledgments

This revised edition of the Local Elected Leadership series has benefited from the contributions of many individuals and partners.

We would first and foremost like to thanks the participants of the Expert group meeting held in Nyeri, Kenya, in October 2002 who held spirited discussions about the many facets of this training series, their use in various countries, and ways to improve them based on their collective experience and the results of the user survey conducted earlier. These participants made consensus possible on major additions, deletions, and changes in the content, structure and process of these training materials that will assure their continued use and service to a world-wide audience of local government officials, and capacity building institutions and their staff. Their valuable observations and recommendations have indeed shaped the structure and substance of this revised series of Elected Leadership. In this regard, we particularly would like to mention the contributions of Ms. Habiba Eid of Sustainable Development Center for Training and Capacity Building, Egypt, Mr. Artashes Gazaryan of SPTC/VDM , Lithuania, Ms. Anna Laczkowska of FSDL Training Centre, Poland, Mr. Patrick Senelart of Habitat et Participation, Belgium, Mr. Kulwant Singh and Mr. K.K. Pandey of Human Settlements Management Institute (HSMI), India, Mr. Mohamed Soumare of Environnement Et Développement Du Tiers-Monde (ENDA), Ms. Ana Vasilache of Partners Foundation for Local Development (FPDL), Romania, Ms. Luba Vavrova of the Local Government Assistance Centre, Slovakia, Mr. Nestor Vega Jimenez of IULA-CELCADEL, Ecuador, as well as Mr. David Tees and Fred Fisher who are consultants and also the principal authors of this revised Elected Leadership series.

In addition, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of several partners in the User Survey on the first edition of the Elected Leadership series conducted prior to the expert group meeting mentioned above. The results of the survey were instrumental in informing the agenda of the expert group meeting and in revising and improving this series generally. We particularly recognize the contributions of the FSDL Training Centre, Poland, HSMI, India, Habitat et Participation, Belgium, and the Local Government Assistance Centre, Slovakia. The Government Training Institute, Kenya through Nelson Mong'oni, Samuel Githaiga, and Absalom Ayodo, and Environnement et Développement du Tiers-Monde (ENDA) through its officers, Mohamed Soumare, Bachir Kanoute and Fatou Ly Ndiaye, also contributed to the development of this manual including the User Survey.

This exercise would never have come to fruition without the initiative, direct support and guidance of UN-HABITAT through many of its substantive officers. We are grateful for the vital support, advice and contributions of these substantive officers led by Gulelat Kebede, Rafael Tuts, Tomasz Sudra, John Hogan, Sarika Seki-Hussey, Hawa Diallo, Mohamed El-sioufi and Liz Case. We also acknowledge the support provided in the

internal review of these manuals by Winnehl Tubman and Bridget Oballa.

A very special recognition goes to the principal authors of this revised Elected Leadership Series, Fred Fisher and David Tees. The authors have worked tirelessly to ensure high substantive quality throughout the development and finalisation of this revised series.

These contributions have all shaped this edition, which we trust will offer many opportunities for capacity development of local governments, their leaders and stakeholders.

Rafael Tuts,
Chief, Training and
Capacity Building Branch,
UN-HABITAT

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Introduction to the LEL Series

Introduction

*Leadership and learning are indispensable to
each other.*

John F. Kennedy

Welcome to the revised Edition of the Local Elected Leadership Series. When UN-HABITAT introduced the first edition of these materials in the early 1990s, no one expected them to be so successful. Since then, thousands of local elected officials, men and women worldwide, have used the series to increase their leadership knowledge and skills, and to improve their performance as community leaders. In addition, hundreds of trainers have participated in helping these officials discover new ways to carry out the many roles and responsibilities associated with local elected leadership.

The first series was translated into a multitude of languages over the past ten years, and used on every continent but Antarctica. For whatever reasons, the Chapters, as they were called in the first edition, were able to transcend cultural, political, ethnic, and language boundaries to take local elected officials and many others on a unique voyage of learning and discovery. While the success of the initial series is gratifying, it makes the production of the new edition just that much more challenging.

The world has changed dramatically in the past decade, and these changes have had an enormous impact on local governments and the roles and responsibilities of locally elected leaders. There are many global trends - economic, political, social, environmental, cultural, and technological - that directly affect local government and its ability to perform to citizen expectations. While local government continues to be judged by its ability to deliver clean water, improve sanitation, alleviate poverty, provide public health and safety programmes and services, and manage a myriad of other community-based services, you, as elected officials, and your staff are also held to another set of expectations and standards. We are, of course, referring to how the processes of local self-governance operate.

Openness, accountability, inclusiveness, trust, and direct citizen engagement - these concepts, principles, strategies, and more, have become the fundamental mandates by which local elected and appointed leaders are increasingly held accountable. In many local governments around the world, gender equity and inclusiveness continues to be a challenge. In other words, it's a much more complex and demanding world than it was when this series was originally written. This new edition of the Elected Leadership Series, borne from the experience and counsel of those local elected officials and trainers who used the initial series, will strive to address these new challenges without losing some of the unique features that made the initial series so successful.

Our first challenge is to organise a lot of ideas, information and insights about this new series that will help you know a bit about its history

and how this series will differ from the first and more importantly, know how you as trainers and local elected officials can take full advantage of them. While we have retained much of the original format and materials from the first edition, many other features have changed. These changes are based in large measure on feedback from trainers, elected officials, and others who have used the materials in a wide range of countries and environments around the world. So, stick with us while we lay the groundwork so you can better understand what the new series is all about.

What you can expect from this introduction chapter

Here is an outline of what you can expect to find in the rest of this introduction.

❑   A short history of the series and how it has evolved over time.

❑   A brief look at some of the trends, mandates, and events that have defined more clearly the roles and responsibilities of local leadership over the past ten years or so.

❑   Some assumptions about local elected leadership and the importance of competency-based learning in fulfilling elected official roles and responsibilities.

❑   A few insights into some of the learning techniques and strategies that are embedded in the materials.

❑   Changes from the first edition that we believe improve the series from a user's perspective.

❑   Various ways the materials can be used to enhance local leadership and performance.

❑   How to expand the potential audience of those who can benefit from these materials in ways that will help local elected officials become even better leaders.

❑   A quick tour of the series and how it is different from the initial set of materials.

❑   A task or two to get you into the spirit of learning more about elected leadership before you dive into the bigger pool of opportunities this series provides to all its users.

A short historical perspective

It will be helpful to reflect a bit about the history of this series and some of the events leading up to the development of the new edition. When the commitment was made by UN-HABITAT in 1990 to produce the initial series, it was based on a growing demand for elected leadership training materials. Local elected officials, men and women of different economic status and from various parts of the world were saying they needed additional training in their leadership roles and responsibilities. On the other hand, there was little concrete evidence about what new knowledge and skills they thought they needed to be more effective. While we reviewed the few formal training needs assessment documents that were available at the time and interviewed a sizable number of elected officials in various places, we also relied on our collective experiences in working with elected officials around the world. As we quickly discovered, there was a lot of conventional wisdom floating around about what local elected officials needed to learn to be effective leaders. The challenge was to put together a training experience that would not only test the assumptions that were driving the need for such training, but our assumptions about what the content of the training should be and how it should be delivered.

When the first draft of these materials was field tested in Uganda in 1991, the proposed series included ten roles: policy maker, decision maker, communicator, facilitator, enabler, negotiator, financier, overseer, power broker, and leader. The field test was carefully designed to reflect the diversity of the larger global community of potential users. It included ten men and ten women who represented a variety of characteristics. They included the mayor of Kampala, the most prominent local elected official in the country, and nineteen other elected officials from intermediate cities, large districts and rural villages. Their work experience and formal education were just as diverse. It was a rich mix of the kinds of local elected officials the series hoped to serve.

This initial workshop was ten days long with one day of training devoted to each of the roles. At the end of each day, the participants provided invaluable feedback on both the content of the materials and the training designs and exercises. The trainers were from Kenya and Uganda, and not the developers of the materials. Additional trainers from other countries in the region were invited to attend as observers. It was important to learn whether local trainers could use the materials successfully without a lot of preparation. The field test was successful, and the feedback from the participants and trainers on all aspects of the programme and materials helped to determine the design and content of the series.

The initial content of the series of chapters was the result of considerable negotiation and discussion amongst the key stakeholders in the process. Prior to the field test, there was concern amongst some UN-HABITAT officials and staff that the role of *Power Broker* was not appropriate and should not be included in the series. Since elected officials often abuse their use of power, why help them be better at doing something they shouldn't do?

The elected men and women who participated in the field test had a different viewpoint. They were unanimous in their recommendation that this module be retained. They said the power broker role of the elected leader cannot be ignored, however badly it is misused, and needs to be addressed in elected leadership training.

They also told us there was an elected leadership responsibility missing in the field tested version, a role they called *institution builder*. "Help us understand how we can strengthen our local governments as operating organisations." Based on their input and help, this role was added to the initial series. It has been an important part of the series. For those who have used the first edition, you will discover substantial changes in this version regarding the scope of institution building and the competencies required to carry out this important elected leadership responsibility. These changes have been made based on feedback from elected officials, trainers and others who have used the series since their introduction.

From field testing to action

The series was immediately successful. Before it was published in English by UN-HABITAT, the International Union of Local Authorities' (IULA) regional centre in Quito, Ecuador, printed a Spanish-language version for use in Latin America. While the English version quickly became the standard bearer in many Anglophone countries in Africa and Asia, it really broke the language barrier when the Local Government Initiative, Open Society Institute (LGI/OSI) in Budapest joined hands with UN-HABITAT to conduct a training of trainers for participants from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. That workshop, held in Romania in 1995, was organised by the leaders of what has since become Partners Romania Foundation for Local Development (FPDL). With continued support from LGI/OSI and UN-HABITAT, FPDL has conducted numerous training of trainer (TOT) workshops through the Regional Programme for Capacity Building in Governance and Local Leadership for East and Central European countries. LGI/OSI also supported the translation and printing of the series into a number of languages in the region.

While all this was happening, the series probably got its most rigorous workout as a local government and training capacity-building effort in Slovakia. The principal author of the initial series took a long term assignment to work with local governments in that country and saw UN-HABITAT's storehouse of training materials as a major resource for meeting Slovakia's local government training needs and helping to strengthen local training institutions that were working with local governments within the country. Working through a USAID funded project managed by the International City/County Management Association, the

principal author worked closely with the Slovakia Foundation for Training in Self-Government and its eleven Regional Training Centres to help them build a sustainable training capacity to serve that country's local governments.

While many other UN-HABITAT materials were used to provide training for local government officials in Slovakia, it was the Elected Leadership Series that became the centre piece for their concerted initiatives in local government capacity building. In the first three and one half years of the programme, forty-eight local trainers were trained to conduct the EL Series, and nearly 5,000 elected men and women from over 600 local governments participated in the Elected Leadership Series of workshops. The Slovak trainers, as capacity-building ambassadors, also helped to establish similar programmes in other countries. There were many valuable lessons learned from the Slovak programme, which incidentally continues to thrive without external assistance. We have tried to capture the most important ones in the Users Guide. We invite all of you to delve into that useful document, no matter what your roles and responsibilities are in using these materials.

As the demand for the Elected Leadership Series continued to expand and the challenges of being a competent local elected official grew more complex, the UN-HABITAT leadership decided it was time to revise the series. This time they had a much richer body of knowledge, experience, and understanding about the leadership competencies needed to be more effective and efficient as a locally elected official. Nevertheless, they wanted to be certain that their perceptions about the learning needs of local elected officials, and how best to provide them with leadership training were collaborated by those who had been using the materials over the past decade.

To tap this well of user-experience, UN-HABITAT conducted an extensive survey of trainers and elected officials and convened an expert group meeting at their headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, to provide firsthand accounts of ways to improve the series. These 2002 outreach initiatives provided valuable insights and guidance in the preparation of this new set of materials. Based on the user survey, the expert group meeting consultations, and a full decade of direct involvement in the use of these materials worldwide, we believe this new edition will surpass the success of the initial series and establish new benchmarks of excellence in local elected leadership competencies and performance around the world.

Nothing is permanent but change.

Heraclitus, 500BC

The changing local elected leadership environment

There was a time when local elected officials only worried about such things as neighbourhood arguments, keeping the streets clean and maintained, assuring that basic public health facilities and programmes were in place, and showing up at the monthly council meeting to cast their votes for maintaining the status quo. No more!

The official life of the elected official has become increasingly complicated and demanding. While the scope and intensity of local government challenges vary dramatically from country to country and from large cities to rural communities, the basic competencies and principles that define good governance are remarkably similar. These are the common denominators we will use to bridge the vast differences that define the environment within which individual men and women elected to local government operate around the world.

We would be remiss not to draw your attention to the horrendous events and conditions that define the urban condition in many parts of the world. It is this milieu of on-going and growing challenges that sets the stage for local government capacity building initiatives, of which elected leadership training represents the key fulcrum. With few exceptions, local governments and their elected officials are confronted with issues including the following: dire poverty, disenfranchised minorities, the on-going struggle for gender equality and equity, street children, violence against women, civil strife, HIV-AIDS and now SARS, chemical pollutants that know no bounds, inadequate basic services such as water and sanitation, chaotic spatial and social planning, inadequate and unsafe housing, the effects of a global economy that brings unexpected consequences to local communities, the potential for terrorism in seemingly tranquil places, and environmental degradation. The list goes on and on.

Within these physical, social and economic challenges that confront local elected leaders in varying degrees of complexities are a set of evolving principles and expected norms that define "good" local governance. While many of these principles and norms were recognised as important guidelines in the development of the initial set of elected leadership materials over ten years ago, they have become mainstream governance and capacity building mandates. They will play a dominant role in our efforts to define the various competencies involved in local elected leadership.

In UN-HABITAT's Global Campaign on Urban Governance, these principles are spelled out. They are:

❑ **Sustainability** in all dimensions of local development;
❑ **Subsidiarity** of authority and resources to the closest appropriate level consistent with efficient and cost-effective delivery of services;
❑ **Equity** of access to decision-making processes and the basic necessities of community life;

- ❑ **Efficiency** in the delivery of public services and in promoting local economic development;
- ❑ **Transparency and Accountability** of decision-makers and all stakeholders;
- ❑ **Civic Engagement and Citizenship** with all citizens participating in and contributing to the common good; and
- ❑ **Security** of individuals and their living environment.

To this rather daunting litany of principled expectations from our local elected leaders we would like to add two more: diversity and trust. **Diversity** embraces the richness of the community in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other characteristics and figures prominently in many of the elected officials' policies and decisions. **Trust** defines the quality and integrity of the many relationships that local elected leaders enter into in the performance of their various roles.

Before we leave this brief attempt to describe the changing environment in which local elected officials are called upon to exercise their leadership competencies, we want to say a word about the term *governance*. We have used it rather liberally in this discussion, and it figures prominently in many official documents of organisations like UN-HABITAT. As those behind the Global Campaign on Urban Governance state,

> Governance is not government. Governance as a concept recognizes that power exists inside and outside the formal authority and institutions of government. Governance includes government, the private sector, and civil society...Governance emphasizes "process". It recognises that decisions are made based on complex relationships between many actors with different priorities.[1]

For a slightly different look at governance, we turn to The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

The Principles of Good Governance[2]

Put simply, governance is, at one and the same time, the process of decision making and the means by which these decisions are implemented. In an urban context, governance involves both formal and informal actors, such as municipal authorities, service providers, the local representatives of central government, NGOs, private sector interests, the media, community groups, grassroots organisations and, critically, the citizens themselves. Good governance has eight characteristics:

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[1] *The Global Campaign on Urban Governance, Concept Paper, 2nd Edition: March 2002.* Campaign Secretariat, UN-HABITAT, Nairobi, Kenya, p.8.

[2] *What is Good Governance?* United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, www.unescap.org/huset/gg/governance.htm

1. It promotes and encourages **participation** including that of children.
2. It requires **respect for the law** and the full protection of human rights.
3. It involves **transparency** in decision making, and information is freely available and easily understandable to all.
4. It is **responsive**, implementing decisions and meeting needs within a reasonable time frame.
5. It is **consensus-oriented**, involving the mediation of different interests in society and sensitivity towards the relative influence of different actors including the poorest and most marginalised.
6. It promotes **equity and inclusiveness**, such that all members of society feel that they have a stake in that society.
7. It means that processes and institutions produce **effective** results that meet the needs of society while making the most **efficient** use of resources and promoting sustainability.
8. It is founded upon **accountability**, not only of governmental institutions, but also of private sector and civil society organisations.

There is obviously much more that we could say about the overall environment within which local elected officials perform their leadership roles and responsibilities. The principles that were just outlined in brief will be significant features in the forthcoming discussions of the various competencies and the learning tasks we recommend. We will draw heavily on case situations from various sources and regions of the world to highlight the use of the individual competencies that are the focus of this series of training chapters. We will also focus on issues of gender in each of the chapters to highlight the importance of achieving greater equality for women in not just service as elected officials but in the policies, programmes and services your local government provides its constituents.

Let's Look at gender issues in more depth

Gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of women and men, the relationship between them, and the way behaviours and identities are culturally determined through the process of socialisation. More often than not, these roles are unequal in just about every society. For example, gender is a factor that determines how power and control is distributed in terms of decision making, various kinds of assets, and access to resources, opportunities and benefits. Usually, gender roles are culturally defined; and as cultures evolve and change, so do gender roles.

Gender provides a useful lens by which we can analyse social, political, economic, and governance processes. While this unique lens does not negate the differences between women and men; it can help us both recognize the differences and assess the contributions of both genders to the development of our societies. Gender equality is not just a woman's issue, but a societal issue in which everyone can and should contribute.

In order to foster gender equality, it is often essential to focus on specific initiatives geared to girls and women. By emphasizing programmes that focus specifically towards enabling girls and women, you can address the historical imbalance of power and provide equal access to resources, opportunities, and benefits. Similar affirmative actions can also be used to address the historical marginalization of women and men who have been discriminated against due to race, ethnicity, aboriginality, and disability. These gender mainstreaming actions are integral to forging the larger commitment within your local government and community to build equality and equity between women and men, and girls and boys, at all levels of civic engagement.

In case *gender mainstreaming* is not a common term in your efforts to improve the governance of your community, let's look at how the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) define the practice. According to ECOSOC, gender mainstreaming is the process of determining the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, programmes and services in all areas and levels of engagement It is a strategy for making gender concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all your local government's policies, programmes and services.

By adopting and implementing such an encompassing strategy within your local government, you can thwart the perpetuation of gender inequities that have been so common in many communities around the world. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality *by transforming the mainstream.*[3] We have included a *Gender Equality Checklist* in **Volume 4 - Training Tools,** under the chapter on Leadership. We urge you to consider using it to assess the extent to which your local government is practicing gender mainstreaming in terms of policies, programs, projects, and services.

Local governments can be key actors and leaders in the area of gender mainstreaming. The adoption of a gender mainstreaming approach in your local government will also enable your organization and community to implement principles of good governance, i.e. participation, subsidiary, sustainability, efficiency, equity, transparency and accountability.

The practice of gender mainstreaming can provide immediate and important benefits in the governing and management of your local government. Women bring different and innovative perspectives to such areas of community engagement as land-use planning, development of residential and business areas, transportation and transit planning, economic development, water and sanitation services, housing, budgeting,

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[3] (E.1997.L.10.Para.4. Adopted by ECOSOC 17.7.97)

safety and security, and more importantly to the key areas of poverty reduction and urban sustainability. The discussions of competencies in this local elected leadership series highlight the importance of a gender-inclusive lens for today's local elected leaders.

A reflective opportunity

Spend a few minutes to reflect on the extent to which your local government has adopted and implemented a gender mainstreaming approach to local governance. Be as specific as you can about:

1. The *progress* your local government has had in adopting and implementing gender mainstreaming policies, programmes and services.

    ....
    ....
    ....

2. List those areas of local governance where you believe more emphasis must be given to assure that gender equality can be advanced and sustained during your current term of office.

    ....
    ....
    ....

3. Identify one specific gender mainstreaming policy, program or service that you are willing to champion during the remainder of your term as an elected official.

    ....
    ....
    ....

Why train elected officials?

Learning is not compulsory...neither is survival.

W. Edwards Deming

When we look at the complexity of the environments within which local governments operate and the principles and norms to which local governments should adhere, it is not difficult to understand why elected leadership training should be a high capacity building priority in all your jurisdictions. There are other convincing reasons. Here are just a few:

1. Local governments have taken on new significance in recent years. The drive for democracy in many parts of the world is responsible for much of this since local self-governance is the foundation of democracy. If democracy doesn't work at this level of governance, it probably won't work at higher levels of interaction between citizens and those who represent them. In addition, there is growing recognition that local governments hold the key to the delivery of most basic human services. National governments simply are not adept at carrying out programmes that should be locally based and managed.

2. Your role as a local elected official is an important factor in determining whether democracy works to the satisfaction of your citizens. More often than not, you and your elected colleagues are the men and women who decide those issues that make life easier for all of us. It is local governments that usually provide services like trash collection, clean water, human waste disposal, local streets and footpaths, parks, basic education, markets, and many more of the things we take for granted. For granted, that is, until they don't work or aren't available.

3. Elected leadership training is important because, for one reason or another, so many of you are new in the role. With each new election comes a new crop of potential candidates for training.

4. Many of you were elected because you are successful in some other endeavour in the community. Unfortunately, this doesn't mean you will be automatically successful in your new role as an elected official. Success in whatever you do to earn a living should not be construed as the only preparation you need to be a successful elected leader. Nevertheless, your background is an important and unique asset that you bring to the job. The elected leadership training we are talking about is an opportunity to build on your previous experiences and learning opportunities. It will also be valuable when you move on to other career and life opportunities.

5. Finally, we believe elected leadership training continues to be a high priority in many countries because current offerings are often either inadequate or ineffective. More often than not, training is rule-oriented, meaning you are told what you cannot do rather than helping you to learn what you can do to be more effective as a local leader. While the rules and regulations that govern your actions and conduct are important and should be learned, they don't equip you to provide the kind of leadership that is needed in this turbulent, fast moving world. What you need to learn as a local leader are "how to do it" skills, not just "don't do" information.

In the first edition, we also made some assumptions about your role as a local elected leader, training as capacity-building, and the importance of elected leadership at the local level of governance. We want to revisit these assumptions to see if they are still relevant after more than a decade. We will also add a few insights based on our experiences and the experiences of

others in providing training for local elected officials. The new assumptions and changes in the original ones are presented in *italics*.

Assumptions about the local elected official role

Here are some of the assumptions we made about the role of the local elected official in preparation for writing the initial set of chapters in this series.

1. First and foremost, we think the elected leadership role is very complex. As a man or woman elected to political office, you are expected to be an effective member of the council team and yet an independent thinker and actor, community spokesperson, problem-solver, decision-maker, negotiator, financier; and facilitator. *Based on user feedback, we now realize that a few of the roles were a bit confusing, for example, the facilitator role as defined in the original series. We have addressed these concerns along with many others in the new series.*

2. The elected official responsibilities are demanding. As you already know, it can be a twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week job, particularly if you take it seriously. *Some things never change. It's still a 24-7 work load.*

3. We've assumed the role is often very frustrating. There are never enough resources to go around, and solving one local problem often creates several more. When you help one group of citizens, you may deny others the opportunity to be served. And, what you see as a logical solution to a problem is often branded as a mere political expediency by your opponents. Nobody said it would be easy. *If anything, the elected leadership role is even more demanding now than it was a decade or more ago. And, we suspect that it is much more frustrating!*

4. On the other hand, we are assuming that the role can be enormously satisfying and personally rewarding. There are opportunities to not only make life easier for today's citizens but to leave a legacy of public service for future generations. *We believe there are new insights and strategies, not covered in the original series, which can make your role more rewarding. We have learned a lot recently about the operational strategies associated with what is called **Subsidiarity** or in less pretentious terms, how to empower local citizens as well as marginalized or neglected communities.. Stay tuned. We plan to share these ideas and more in this new edition.*

5. The role is time-consuming. But, it is often more time-consuming than it needs to be. Hopefully, the training we are suggesting will give you more control over the time you spend on elected official business.

6. It is a role full of conflict, particularly if performed well. It demands independent thinking and acting and yet requires you to work in a group decision-making arena. It often demands political party loyalty

while adhering to standards of community-wide accountability. Sometimes it requires you to take actions that go against what others see as "conventional wisdom' because you are better informed about the long-range consequences of such decisions. In spite of your privileged understanding of the situation, the courage to "stand up and be counted" on such issues is never easy.

Assumptions about training local elected officials

Learning is understanding something you've understood all your life, but in a new way.

Doris Lessing

1. Your training needs as an individual -male or female- elected official may be different from those of your colleagues, based on your experience and background.
2. As an elected official, you don't have a lot of time to devote to training, and this constraint must be considered in the design of the training.
3. Given differences in training needs and time constraints, the training materials should provide the trainer with options in designing specific learning events.
4. Most of the elected official training materials now available are designed to impart information about the legal requirements of your role, not to develop skills needed to carry out your role more effectively. *This assumption is not as accurate now as it was when the first edition of these materials was written. We like to think that this series, and other UN-HABITAT training materials, have set a new standard for inter-active and role-focused learning for local governments and NGOs.*

Assumptions about elected leadership

The art of leadership is to act as a representative of a much larger constituency than those who voted for you.

Sir Peter Parker

Finally, we have made some assumptions about the importance of leadership at the local level of governance.

1. Never before has the need for leadership at the local level been so important and obvious. We live in an inter-connected global society, one where events that happen in a far distant part of the world can have a direct impact on your local government and community. As we revisit this assumption, many local governments are concerned about how to prevent Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) from becoming an epidemic in their own communities even though its genesis may have been half a world away. These kinds of locally spawned and fast moving phenomena will continue to reinforce the notion that we are all part of a global and increasingly vulnerable community.

2. Many of the problems you are called upon to solve as an elected councillor are so complex that they require leadership strategies not administrative fixes. These leadership strategies, of necessity, must involve interaction with and mobilisation of other sector institutions and their resources.

3. The magnitude and frequency of "foreign policy" issues and concerns (working with others beyond the borders of the local government you serve) have increased significantly in recent years. You can no longer ignore these external affairs in your efforts to build your own community.

4. The seemingly endless saga of shrinking resources and growing demands for services at the local level has rendered the caretaker approach to government not only inoperative, but dangerous to the long-term health and viability of your communities.

Given these assumptions, training opportunities must go beyond the minimalist approach, i.e. telling you what you can't do by outlining the laws and orders that prescribe the legal boundaries of your actions. While such training is important and needs to be provided, it does not impart a sense of urgency and importance to your role, nor does it begin to develop the knowledge and skills that are required to operate effectively in a difficult and challenging environment. Beyond all else, you must feel "empowered" to act boldly and responsibly in your leadership role.

Governments around the world have a tendency to engage in cumbersome and, at times, counter-productive, bureaucratic behaviour. We suspect your local government is no different. Because our bureaucracies have become so formidable including the national ones that often impose restrictions on local-governments, it is imperative that you, as the local elected official, are equipped to work more effectively and assertively in this difficult environment. It will require more than a basic knowledge of the laws that govern your elected behaviour. We believe it calls for a full measure of leadership from each of you. Yes, leadership. You may be saying, "But, I'm not prepared for this kind of leadership role." In this case, it may be reassuring to remember that leadership has been defined as the process that ordinary people use to bring forth the best in themselves and others.

The leadership process from another perspective

Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm.

Pubilius Syrus: 42 BC

The leadership process is backed by some pretty sound practices. In a survey of over 2000 effective leaders, two management specialists identified five fundamental practices that enable ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. These practices are worth reviewing as we begin to think about the leadership role of the local elected official. They are:

1. **Challenging the process to get things done.** This is done best by constantly questioning the size of and need for the bureaucratic tentacles your government has grown over the years. *In addition, look at the process from the point of view of the principles outlined earlier. In other words, how open and transparent is your government? What assurances are there that the principles of inclusion and diversity permeate the heart and soul of your local government and the way it functions?*

2. **Inspiring a shared vision.** Leadership is the ability to describe what will be as though it has been. Visions are often future-oriented and, therefore, involve what some would call an element of inspiration if they are going to be conveyed to others. There is an old saying that "you can't light a fire with a wet match." So it is with shared visions. *And visions can be brought to light through such activities as strategic planning. We will be discussing this tool and others in the various chapters.*

3. **Enabling others to act.** This may be the greatest asset you have in your local government storehouse when it comes to getting things done. We'll have a lot more to say about how to do this both within your own local government organisation and the community.

4. **Modelling the way.** Electing you to local office represents an act of faith on the part of those who vote. It also puts you on a pedestal or in the spotlight, and therefore raises expectations about who you are and how you should behave. While this may sound a bit intimidating, it can also be seen as an opportunity for you to motivate others to engage in community service through your own example as a role model.

5. **Encouraging the heart**. Building strong, viable communities through local self-governance can be enhanced through such efforts as celebrating community accomplishments and recognising individual contributions. These are the kinds of things that are meant by "encouraging the heart."[4]

Much of what confronts you as an elected leader these days requires new thinking, untried solutions, and a sizable dose of political will. Training for you and your colleagues must reflect this reality and be bold in its response.

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[4] Kouzes, James M. and Posner, Barry Z., *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1990), pp. 7-13.

Differentiation is such a beautiful process. It is proof that the system is alive, that it is elaborating its possibilities.

Barry Oshry

Layout, labels and language

This edition of the elected leadership series differs in many ways from the first. For those who have used the first edition, it will be important to be aware of these differences and the rationale we used in making the changes. If you are a first time user, it will also be important to understand how we have organised the materials and why we use certain linguistic strategies to enhance the potential for learning. Many of the following changes were suggested by members of the Experts Group Meeting (EGM) that UN-HABITAT convened to provide advice on ways to improve the second edition of the series. As stated earlier, this group of user specialists and the many individuals who provided feedback through an assessment survey of users were of immeasurable help in helping us craft this edition.

❑ The term **Councillor** was used in the first edition to identify the primary client of the Elected Leadership Series. Not all elected officials around the world are known as "councillors." Local elected officials are also called mayors, supervisors, commissioners, and probably a lot of other unofficial things by the citizens from time to time. In our efforts to be ecumenical, and not parochial, we will use the term **Local Elected Official** to identify those who are elected to serve on the executive and legislative bodies of their local governments.

❑ We used the term **Role** to identify the various functions that local elected officials perform in carrying out their duties, e.g., **The Councillor in the Role of Facilitator.** That particular choice of words created a lot of confusion not only for those translating the materials to a different language but for the elected officials using the materials. In revising the materials, we have decided to use the term **competency** rather than "role." Competency describes the various knowledge and skill sets that local elected officials need to be effective in their capacity as elected representatives of their communities. These are competencies that can be acquired and enhanced through training and self-directed learning.

❑ Unfortunately, **competency** as defined by dictionaries and experts is also a problematic term. One dictionary we consulted defines competency as "the quality or state of being

competent." This is not very helpful. Then we consulted Thomas Gilbert's book on *Human Competence* where he defined competence "as inversely proportional to the potential for improving performance which is the ratio of exemplary performance to typical performance".[5] At this point we gave up and decided to invent our own definition. When we use the word *competency* within the context of local elected leadership, we are attempting to convey the following meaning to the term:

A **Competency** is the combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be translated into behaviour that is associated with a particular type of elected leadership performance, e.g., policy making or institution building.

For example, we include *policy making* as one of the "competencies" associated with local elected leadership. To be competent as a policy maker, you need to know more about what policies are (knowledge), how to draft effective policy statements (skills), and to recognize that certain policies are important to the functioning of your local government although you may not have supported them in the past (a change of attitude). Your application of increased knowledge, new skills, and a changed attitude results in a different behaviour when it comes to policy making, and this new behaviour is consistent with what citizens perceive as *leadership.* Not only is your image enhanced within the community, but this increased competency and the others you can gain from this series will help you get re-elected.

❑ We've changed the labels that we used in the original series to identify the two parts of each chapter. Part I was called *Essay.* We now refer to Part I as: **Volume 3** - *Concepts, Principles, and Strategies.* Part II in the first edition was entitled *Workshop.* In the new version, we call this part: **Volume 4** - *Training Tools.* We believe these new labels more accurately reflect the content of each part.

❑ We have dropped the "hats" metaphor as one way to describe the different elected official roles covered in each of the role-related chapters. When we switched from *roles* to *competencies* the hats metaphor didn't quite fit. We happen to like metaphors, and they have a rich history as an important learning device. Even Aristotle had some good things to say about the use of metaphors more than 2300 years ago. We will definitely return to this topic a bit later.

❑ The first edition of these chapters included a *Trainer's Guide for Training of Elected Officials.* It became obvious to us and

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[5]   Gilbert, Thomas, *Human Competence: Engineering Worthy Performance.* (New York, McGraw Hill, 1978, p. 20.

others as the materials started to get used in various countries, particularly those operating in a different language, that this Guide was lacking several important components. As a result, that chapter has been replaced with one entitled *User's Guide to the Local Elected Leadership Series.* It includes four separate "how to" sections:

1. How to adapt and translate the materials;
2. How to manage the elected officials training process;
3. How to train trainers and participants; and
4. How to pursue other local government capacity building opportunities through the use of these materials.

If you are into "how-to stuff," you will love **Volume 2 -** User's Guide! The intent of this new Guide is to provide ideas and recommendations on a range of topics and opportunities that were not covered in the original Trainer's Guide. For example, translation to another language requires a lot of sensitivity to many things including the nuances of both languages. We now know a bit more about how to help others manage these translations.

Adaptation for local use, even when the local language is still English, has proven problematic in the past. In one country, the adaptation team, although given explicit permission to change case studies, role plays and other sections in the materials to reflect their local conditions, never made the changes. Only when the country trainers began to complain about the case studies and role plays being "too African" did we realize that the approval to change them was either not taken seriously or never clearly understood. After all, it is rare for publishers and authors to grant this kind of open-ended authority to change the texts of their publications. We have tried to make this point much clearer this time around. We have also included other lessons learned in the adaptation process.

After more than a decade of trying, we have, largely through the initiatives of others, learned a lot about how to manage the training of elected officials. For example, we have learned how to market elected leadership training where there has been no experience to build upon. The same goes for how to train trainers, and, of course, how to help elected officials learn the many competencies they need to be effective leaders. Finally, the User's Guide will describe ways these training materials can be used to train other potential clients, such as non-elected officials and staff members of local governments, community leaders, and the staff and governing boards of non-governmental and community-based organisations. There is a "value-added" potential with these materials that is just

waiting to be capitalized on by resourceful trainers and elected officials. Just because they carry the brand *elected leadership training* doesn't mean they can't be used for other purposes. Be adventuresome.

We mentioned earlier that Part II of each of the competency-based chapters will be compiled in one volume entitled **Volume 4** - *Training Tools.* During the Expert Group Meeting and in other conversations with users of the original series the question came up about why the training participants received Part II (now Volume 4) when it was primarily written for trainers. In the majority of these discussions, it was recommended that we keep the distinction between these two parts while changing two things to make them more useful to both trainers and participants. First, it was suggested that we be clearer about how elected officials and other workshop participant-users might use the materials back on the job. For example, an elected official might conduct a short training session for neighbourhood leaders in her or his district on how to run better meetings or conduct an assessment of one of the local government's policies based on the ideas put forth in the policy making *competency* Chapter.

Second, we have added what we are calling "governance tools." These are tools to help users put their learning to use. All of the chapters will include some kind of back-home planning or application exercise which is focused on the training participant, not the trainer. Other tools will be included that are intended to be used to enhance the performance of the learners after the formal training is completed. By the way, the *Reflection* tasks we have sprinkled amongst the text of this volume - **Volume 3:** *Concepts and Strategies* often make good training exercises. If you are a trainer who is planning a workshop on one of the competencies included in the series, don't hesitate to adapt one or more of the reflection exercises for use in your programme. They are amongst the value-added resources that can be used in a variety of ways.

The final change we want to call your attention to is in the content of the substantive chapters, those directly targeted to enhancing elected leadership knowledge and skills. First, a new chapter has been added based on the recommendations of the EGM delegates. It covers the representation role of the local elected official. We have also changed the titles of the other chapters to reflect ideas put forth at the Expert Group Meeting. We have dropped the role-oriented titles such as *The Elected Official as Enabler, Decision Maker,* or *Overseer* and opted for action verbs like *enabling, decision making,* and *overseeing.* The

switch was made for several reasons. Some of the role titles simply didn't fit. For example, many elected official users had difficulty seeing their roles as encompassing those of facilitator or financier. Others, particularly the translators, had problems with the term *Power Broker.*

On the other hand, assigning action verbs to the roles of *Leadership* and *Representation* were equally problematic but for different reasons. In terms of "representing" it carried with it the connotation that the elected official is only representing certain narrowly defined interests. While this is often the case, we believed it denies the greater role and responsibility of elected representation of all the citizens of your jurisdiction. Finally, "leading" seemed to miss the whole point of the elected official being a leader. We see the leadership role as encompassing all of the competencies covered in the chapters. When used in synergy with one another, they represent a leadership dynamic that is much more than the sum of the individual competencies.

Based on these recommendations and ideas, we encourage you to think about these twelve Chapters as covering ten competencies and two major roles. The roles are *Representation* and *Leadership*, and the ten competencies: *Communicating, Facilitating, Using Power, Decision Making, Policy Making, Enabling, Negotiating, Financing, Overseeing, and Institution Building.* We have sequenced the chapters in the series as we think they should be presented in a comprehensive training programme. By comprehensive we mean a series of workshops covering all the twelve chapters starting with Representation and concluding with Leadership. The ten competencies would be covered in a series of learning events sandwiched between these two important roles. While we recommend that the competency training modules be presented in the sequence listed above, we suspect that this won't always happen. Nevertheless, the proposed sequencing has merit.

This is probably more than you ever wanted to know about the changes that we made in the materials. On the other hand, they will help you understand more fully the rationale behind the changes. What we want to do now is:

1. discuss some of the learning devises we have sprinkled throughout the chapters, things like proverbs, reflections, and metaphors, and
2. describe the contents of the twelve substantive chapters.

Learning devises that fall outside the box

This series of local elected leadership chapters contain some features that many of you might see as a bit out of the ordinary. For example, you will encounter proverbs and quotations from various parts of the world. They are, more often than not, stuck away in some corner of a page when it occurs to us that it's time to lighten up the discussion. Or, you may come across a burst of metaphorical rhetoric that leaves you temporarily puzzled, but maybe not as puzzled as when we extol their virtues as important learning devises. And then, there are those "reflection" exercises and other tasks that are aimed, not at the trainer, but elected officials. Since we will be employing these verbal surrogates in the writing of these chapters, we thought it might be helpful to explain what they are but, more importantly, why we use them.

> *Proverbs mirror the past to benefit the present.*
>
> **Adeline Yen Mah**

Proverbs and quotations

The sixteenth century French essayist, Michel de Montaigne, said, "I quote others only the better to express myself." In Sierra Leone, they say, "proverbs are the daughter of experience." The difference between quotable quotes and proverbs just might be their age. According to Wolfgang Meider, a self-proclaimed proverb scholar, "Proverbs are small pieces of human wisdom that have been handed down from generation to generation and continue to be applicable and valid even in our modern technological age."[6] Or, as an old Moroccan proverb reminds us, "Endurance pierces marble."

As you can see, we have used both proverbs and quotations to throw a bit of light on the use of proverbs and quotations. They provide insight and, best of all, insight into other cultures. Often they are provocative, challenging us to think. They can also be contradictory, but then life is contradictory. They can amuse us, and in this chaotic world, it's nice to be amused. But most of all, they help to make a particular point far better than we can. They help to illustrate what is happening in our thought patterns.

For writers, trainers, and elected officials, the use of proverbs and quotations cannot be taken lightly. First of all, they must fit the context of what we are trying to say. As we know from experience, it's not always easy to find just the right proverb to better make a point or nail down a description in another fashion. We are reminded of an incident in a central European country where the representative of the agency that was funding the

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[6] Berman, Lewis, *Proverb Wit and Wisdom*, (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1997) p. xix.

translation and printing of that country's version of the Elected Leadership Series insisted that we use all proverbs from that country. He even hired a local scholar to provide them.

Unfortunately, her proverbs didn't fit the context of what we were trying to convey in the texts of the chapters except the one she selected for the role of the Leader, which was, "The fish smells from the head." Perhaps appropriate in some cases, but hardly inspiring! When we brought our dilemma to the committee of trainers and elected officials who were helping with the translations, they defended the use of proverbs from all over the world, saying that they helped them see issues and ideas from a different perspective.

Metaphors

> *The metaphor is probably the most fertile power possessed by man.*
>
> **Jose Ortega y Gasset**

Metaphors may sound complicated but they aren't. Most of us use them everyday in our conversations, dialogues, formal presentations, and written documents. They are the linking pins between ideas and images. Whether the metaphor is Shakespearian in eloquence or earthy, simple or complex, its primary function is to compare two unlike things such as objects, ideas, or feelings and paint a picture of their similarities. Metaphors often accomplish in a word or phrase what could take paragraphs to describe. Of course, they can be imprecise which means that they often travel the wave-lengths of imagination between the communicator and the recipient(s) of the message.

Take for example the metaphor *the elected official wears many hats* that we used in describing the first series of these chapters. One critic declared that it's not practical to wear more than one hat at once therefore it was a stupid idea. The metaphor obviously fell short of its communication goal with this person. In Slovakia, where groups of 18-24 elected officials went through the entire series of chapters in monthly residential workshops, they adopted the hat metaphor as a community-building opportunity. One group had t-shirts printed with hats and the name of their group; another wore various kinds of wacky and wonderful hats to their graduation ceremony. One learning group baked a birthday cake in the shape of a hat and stopped the graduation ceremony to present it to one of the organisers. Learning can be fun, and metaphors make it happen.

Andrew Ortony says there are three main reasons why we use metaphors in our daily lives and particularly in learning situations. They are:

❏   to achieve *compactness* in how we communicate

❏   to include *vividness* in our language

❏   to help us express the *inexpressible* [7]

On this last point, we often have difficulty expressing who we are or how we feel, particularly in a situation where we may be unacquainted with each other or perhaps when we come from different cultural backgrounds. One of the most powerful metaphorical exercises in a new learning community is to ask individuals to take newsprint, magic markers, and some time, and to draw who they are. We have had amazing results from this exercise in different parts of the world, so we are confident that it translates across language and cultural boundaries. Speaking of boundaries, metaphors know few of them. They can be expressed in one word bursts, poetry, short stories, paintings, sculptures, or any medium available. We leave this discussion of metaphors for now with some words from an old sage who knew how to spin metaphors. Aristotle, in De Poetica more than 2300 years ago, proclaimed,

> The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others; it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an eye for resemblance.

Reflections

From time to time we will ask you to stop reading and reflect upon what you have been reading. These mental detours have two purposes. They are designed to help you apply what you have been learning by stepping back and thinking about it from your own perspective and experiences. It is an opportunity to become a participant in what is being said. According to Marvel Proust, *We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us.* These reflection exercises can also be effective training exercises. So, as a trainer, don't hesitate to poach them if they look like they might fit into your training design. Speaking of *reflections*, here's how they work.

*"And if you ask a thousand questions, yet do
not pause to listen and reflect on what emerges
in response, how will you learn?*

The Dialogue Group

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[7]   Ortany, Andrew, *Metaphor and Thought*, (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Press, 1993.), p.15.

Welcome to experiential learning

What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember;
what I do, I understand

Confucius: 451BC

Since the reflection exercise is our introduction into the process of experiential learning and it provides the very foundation of these training materials, it's time we talked about it. Experiential learning is a fancy term for learning through doing. It's the process where we construct knowledge, acquire skills, change our attitudes, and enhance our values through direct experience.

One of the best explanations of experiential learning we have found is in *Processing the Experience: Strategies to Enhance and Generalize Learning* by John Luckner and Reldan Nadler. Here's what they have to say.

> Experiential learning takes place when individuals engage in some activity, reflect upon the activity critically, derive some useful insight from the analysis, and incorporate the result through a change in understanding and/or behaviour. Experiential learning is based on the assumption that all knowing must begin with the individual's relationship to the topic. The effectiveness of experiential learning is derived from the maxim that, 'nothing is more relevant to us than ourselves.' One's own reactions to, observations about, and understanding of something are more important than someone else's opinion about it.[8]

We say more about these concepts and strategies in the *User's Guide* so we encourage you to take advantage of that chapter before you begin any formal role as either a trainer or participant in this series. By the way, just take a moment and reread what Luckner and Nadler said in their first sentence in the quotation above. We, of course, call your attention to the part where they say, *"... reflect upon the activity critically... ."* That's what reflection exercises are all about.

LEL: An all-purpose vehicle for community-based learning

Before we wrap up this discussion with a brief look at the competency and role chapters in the series, we want to remind you that this Local Elected Leadership Series has great potential to serve the learning needs of a wide range of non-elected leaders, officials, and staff members of local governments and community-based organisations. While the strong focus we have placed on the elected leader may discourage some from using these materials in other domains, we encourage elected leaders, trainers, training managers, and others to break the labelling chains and turn these materials loose. With some imagination, the LEL Series can become your all-purpose learning vehicle for local leadership training.

We recognize this potential because the initial edition of the series was used in many unintended settings. The series was used in many communities in Africa to train leaders and staff of non-governmental organisations. A young trainer in Slovakia involved elected officials and key managers from the same jurisdiction in a series of skill development workshops based on the series. In Bosnia, the chapters have been transformed into radio-based learning opportunities for community leaders. In Romania, they are used to conduct youth leadership training.

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[8] Luckner, John and Reldan Nadler, *Processing the Experience: Strategies to Enhance and Generalize Learning.* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1997.) p. 3.

While you will find more detailed ideas in the User's Guide on how to make creative use of these materials, we want to suggest just a few options to demonstrate their versatility.

For local elected officials:

❑ A series of residential workshops for individual elected officials that covers the entire series. This model was used in Slovakia with amazing results. The training was conducted over several months in 1.5 to 3 day workshops involving the same participants in each workshop.

❑ Workshops for the elected officials of one specific local government jurisdiction.

❑ Workshops involving elected officials and their local government management team members.

❑ Workshops involving elected leaders from adjacent local governments who can benefit from more inter-governmental cooperation and need additional skills to help them work more effectively together.

❑ Short skill development work sessions at municipal association conferences.

❑ Workshops targeting elected officials who have specific responsibilities within their elected bodies, i.e., members of finance committees who can benefit from competency training in financing and overseeing.

❑ Or workshops involving elected officials and NGO and community leaders on enabling strategies for increasing citizen participation.

For other-than-elected-officials:

❑ Variations of training sessions involving local government appointed leaders and staff based on time and other resource constraints or opportunities.

❑ Workshops for NGO and community leaders.

❑ Competency training workshops for local business owners and operators who might not have access to training opportunities otherwise or, as a part of a programme to encourage the start-up of small businesses in the community. Everyone can

benefit, for example, from better communicating and decision-making skills, and the materials can be easily adapted to serve non-elected official learning needs.

❑ A special series for women, minority members, or others in the community who might have been denied access to leadership roles for any number of reasons.

❑ Youth leadership programmes.

❑ And many more. The potential is only limited by your imagination involving opportunities, and by your creativity in adapting the materials to serve other clientele learning needs.

Finally, a quick tour of the series

As we have mentioned before, this new edition of the Local Elected Leadership Series is borne out of extensive experience in the use of the initial edition, generous feedback from users, and the counsel of constituent specialists and experts. It includes one new chapter, based on the role of *Representation*, and significant changes in the content materials of the rest of the series. We have changed the orientation of ten of the chapters from "roles" to "competencies" for reasons mentioned earlier in this introduction. We have also organised the twelve substantive chapters in a slightly different order and format. For example, we have defined **representation** and **leadership** as the major roles of the local elected official. We treat the first as the foundation stones from which to build one's competencies as an elected leader, and the latter as the capstone event in the learning experience where all the other competencies are focused on the role of leadership. In between, we have organised the ten competencies based on the following rationale.

After helping elected officials understand their *Representation* role we move to *Communicating* as a competency. In many of the workshops held around the world where the entire series was offered as a total learning package, the *communicating* competency was seen as the skill that was most important to enhanced learning in all the other competencies. *Facilitating* was usually offered as the second competency in many programmes based on the importance on knowing more about group process. We recommend that you follow the lead of others on this one as well.

We've moved *Using Power* up to the number three slot in the list of competencies because it is so fundamental to many of the other competencies such as *Decision Making* and *Policy Making*, which follow as the fourth and fifth competencies. These also tend to be competencies associated with the functioning of elected leaders as a body rather than one-on-one relationships. As elected leaders work beyond the boundaries of their institution, they are often called upon to use their Enabling and Negotiating competencies and skills, which we have clustered as the sixth and seventh,

although the sequencing rationale gets a bit fuzzy at this point. The last three competencies, *Financing, Overseeing,* and *Institution Building,* are those that are more associated with the functioning of the organisation. The capstone role of *Leadership* completes the learning cycle from the standpoint of the series.

We admit that the rationale for organising many of the middle chapters is a bit arbitrary. Given this, we fully expect that those organising the training will take whatever liberty they feel is appropriate to accommodate their own biases. There is another way to organise them, and it relates to the types of competency. Some are more personal, like *Communicating, Facilitating and Negotiating.* Others are more associated with the official responsibilities of the elected official, such as Policy Making, *Decision Making, Enabling,* and *Using Power.* The final category has to do with functions that are more associated with maintaining the local government's operational fitness.

Here is a summary of the *Representation* and *Leadership* roles and each of the ten competencies we believe are important in carrying out these essential roles.

Representation and leadership

We have focused on *representation* and *leadership* as the two most important roles that local elected officials assume when they are elected to serve their communities. *Representation* is the legal mandate of the office you have been elected to serve, and *Leadership* is the sum total of your contributions as an elected official to the common good of the community during your time in office and beyond.

Representation is the core responsibility of local elected officials who by the vote of the people and the legal mandate of the office are responsible for representing the rights and obligations of all the citizens within their local government jurisdiction. It's an awesome responsibility, and one taken too lightly by many elected officials. Perhaps the most blatant shortfall in local elected leadership performance is the tendency to represent special interests within their community and not the common good of all citizens. This is no small feat since it is often difficult to separate special interests from the common good.

Leadership is the elected official's legacy measured by immediate results and the long-term consequences of their public service. It is also your ability to keep your representation responsibilities in perspective and to apply all your personal competencies to bring about positive and significant changes in the lives of your constituents and the community. While election to public office carries with it the assumption that you are a leader and will perform as a leader on behalf of your constituents, it is an assumption that is tested by each decision you make and each act you perform.

While the ten competencies we have defined in this series are central to your ability to fulfil your leadership role, it will take much more. In this last chapter in the series, we will share with you a wide range of ideas and perceptions about what leadership means to others and relate it to your roles and responsibilities as a local elected official. While these templates may help you understand what others see as leadership, your own leadership legacy will ultimately be defined by the perceptions of those you serve.

The ten competencies of local elected leadership

Superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lasts longer.

William Shakespeare

As we said earlier, **competency** is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that can be translated into the kinds of behaviour that are associated with a particular type of elected leadership performance, e.g., policy making or institution building. While there are many more competencies you will need in order to perform your role as an elected official effectively, the ten core competencies outlined below and covered in this series should provide a firm foundation on which to secure your Leadership reputation and legend.

1. **Communicating** involves giving and receiving information, ideas, and feelings with accuracy and understanding. Such a simple definition belies the complexity of the competency. The ability to communicate effectively as an elected official is complicated by the many options that are available. For example, are we talking about written or oral communication? Communicating to a group of people, or an individual? Communicating in a formal setting such as a council hearing or in a local tavern after the council meeting has adjourned? Or, communicating by internet to your constituents? And most importantly, what is it you want to communicate and why?

   Since it would be impossible to cover all the communicating situations you find yourself in as an elected official, we asked the group of seasoned users who gave us feedback on the revision of this series, what to do. They said, "Focus on interpersonal communications." They also asked that we discuss some of the more typical situations in which elected officials are called upon to use their interpersonal communicating competencies. We will also look at some basic

principles of good governance that are associated with the communicating competency, i.e., openness, transparency, accountability, and trust.

2. **Facilitating** is even more boundless than the communicating competency and covers such activities as fostering collective effort, helping others solve problems, ensuring that committee meetings are productive, and managing various kinds of inter-personal and inter-group conflict.

   While the art of facilitating was described in the English language as early as 1611, this competency seems to have taken on many new meanings in recent years. We will begin by commenting on some of the core values that define principled facilitating, and then describe many of the strategies that are now found in the contemporary facilitator's tool kit. These include: understanding group process and how to make it work for you rather than against you; managing disagreements and conflicts through such strategies as mediation and consensus building; planning and running meetings even though they are the bane of your elected existence; deciding whether team building is an appropriate elected official competency; and many other facilitating skills.

3. **Using Power** involves using your personal and positional sources of power to get things done. Using power as an elected official can be problematic if you misuse or abuse it. Be principled in its use.

   The discussion of power, particularly power associated with political office, makes a lot of people uncomfortable. Their reactions are understandable. There is a tremendous amount of corruption in local governments around the world and most of it can be traced back to the misuse of political power. But this is no reason to avoid discussing the uses of power in a series of this kind or to avoid exploring the sources of corruption, which are, in large measure, the misuse of power and influence that are vested in the formal office of the elected official.

   We will look at several sources of power, many of them personal and not associated with the elected office you represent. It is our belief that these sources of power are resources to help you get things accomplished for your constituents. The power sources we will be discussing are, in themselves, value neutral. It is in the use, or we should say misuse, of power and authority that elected officials and other public servants sometimes go astray.

4. Simply put, **Decision Making** involves deciding how you will act when there is an option or choice. Of course, it's much more complicated than that. For example, failing to act on your options and choices is also a form of decision making and sometimes very appropriate.

While decision making as a competency is more often associated with the management process than elected leadership, it defines in more specific terms than any other who you are and what you stand for as an elected official. We will explore how decisions are made by elected officials; how to improve the process; the importance of sharing decision making with others; the feasibility-importance criteria for making sound decisions; the most elusive of decisions,- the decision not to decide; -and much, much more.

5. **Policy Making** involves understanding the need for new or improved formal elected body mandates, analysing the potential consequences of acting or not acting to establish these mandates, examining alternatives, and determining implementation strategies that will guide present and future actions to benefit the community.

   The policy making competency is perhaps the most obvious and least understood of all the competencies we cover in this series. In fact, the term policy was frequently confused with "politics" by users of the initial set of training materials. The competency of policy making involves: understanding the big picture; helping citizens define their community's priorities and values; setting long-range goals to achieve them; establishing formal mechanisms for assuring continuity of progress; developing strategic plans of implementation, and determining ways to assess their short-term and long range consequences.

   While policy making is a competency associated with the formal "rule-making" powers of an elected body, there are other ways that policies are made informally by others. Non-elected officials and members of the local government family can make decisions that either subvert or redirect the formal policy making mandates of elected bodies. For example, a formal policy adopted by the elected leadership can undergo a dramatic transformation in the hands of an unsympathetic staff. Policy can also be made by default. When councils take a passive role in policy making, other forces move in to fill the void. We will be discussing the various ways that the policy making competency can be thwarted or supported by others who are not elected policy makers.

6. **Enabling** provides the means for others to get things done.

   The enabling competency may be the one which has gained the most new experience in being used since the first edition of this series was published. It defines local governance largely in terms of what others can do to provide programmes and services for the community and citizens, not what local governments should do. Enabling includes a rich mix of strategies such as decentralisation, delegation, networking,

public-private partnerships, neighbourhood governance, and many more. There are some down sides to this multi-faceted mix of enabling strategies, and we will include these for your enlightenment. The increasing scarcity of public resources and the growing need for services at the grassroots level makes the enabling competency an increasingly important tool in the elected leaders' governance bag.

7. **Negotiating** involves interaction by two or more parties representing differing interests and positions who seek to do better than they could otherwise through jointly agreed-upon actions.

    The negotiating competency is one that we all use to varying degrees of frequency and success in our daily lives. Nevertheless, in order to negotiate more successfully many of us could benefit from a bit of skill development. Negotiating is often confused with mediation. We will shed some light on the differences. We will also look at some preferred methods of negotiation and how they are conducted. The ideal negotiating solution involves agreements amongst all involved parties who see themselves as better off than they would have been without negotiating although maybe not as well off as they wanted. Elected leadership performance is often judged by how successful the officials are in negotiating agreements with others.

8. **Financing** involves making decisions about raising, allocating, and expending public funds.

    Financing is one of the most traditional competencies that local elected officials are expected to have and use in their local leadership role. At the heart of this competency is the ability to understand and bring leadership to the annual budgeting process. But there's much more, and it involves such competency knowledge and skill arenas as: short-term and long-range financial planning; exploring cost-sharing opportunities with other local governments, citizens, and the private/NGO sectors of the community; assuring that performance reviews of major revenue and expenditure categories are conducted periodically and professionally; tracking various trends that could have major impact on the financial health of your local government and community; assuring openness and transparency in all financial matters; and leveraging public assets to foster economic development.

9. **Overseeing** ensures that the elected body and the local government staff are doing the right things and doing things right. Overseeing involves the on-going and periodic monitoring and evaluating of the performance of all local government policies, programmes, and services.

    Overseeing may be the least favourite responsibility of

elected officials. It's much more satisfying to allocate community resources than to oversee how well they are being spent. But the overseeing competency is much more than ensuring that community resources are being well spent. Elected leaders in exercising their oversight responsibilities, should ensure: that their formal policies continue to serve the community; that joint ventures, neighbourhood governance programmes, and other collaborative efforts to share programmes and service delivery are being managed efficiently and effectively; and, that the principles of openness, inclusion, accountability, and trust are built into all the local government's policies, interactions, programmes, and services.

Too often the overseer role deals only with issues of wrongdoing and misconduct on the part of staff. A more proactive implementation of their overseeing competencies would assure that the outcomes of public service ventures are congruent with their policies and intent, and the quality of service is meeting established standards. This suggests that the council has clearly defined standards of performance. To oversee performance effectively requires benchmarks for measuring performance. As you can see, the overseer role gets a bit complex when it is taken seriously. We will look at various ways to involve others in the overseeing process so your local government can maximize resources, involve the community more directly in programme and service planning and delivery, and improve the quality of government services.

10. **Institution Building** ensures that the elected council, as an institution; the local government organisation and staff; and key intergovernmental and community-based organisations with whom the local government works closely are supported in their developmental needs and challenges.

Based on feedback from users of the initial series of chapters, and the EGM participants, we have greatly expanded the scope of institution-building responsibilities of council and the competencies required to carry them out. We will provide an overview of institution-building concepts and strategies and outline a variety of tools that can be used to carry out this elected leadership responsibility.

Representation, leadership, ten competencies, and much, much more

What we have outlined as a learning challenge for you and other local elected officials must seem daunting, even to the most seasoned leaders within your midst. And yet, there is so much more that you need to know and skills that you need to acquire to represent local people of all ages in this important leadership role. For example, you need to be conversant with the many laws, rules, regulations, ordinances, and standing orders that describe the powers and duties of your elected office. Knowledge of these legal requirements is the first order of business when it comes to training. Unfortunately, this is where many elected official training programme initiatives start and stop.

In addition to understanding your role and responsibility from a legal perspective and mastering the competencies we have laid out for your consideration, you will need to be adept at understanding all the procedures and regulations that govern your local government authority. These include such things as:

❑ The financial management system and all the mechanisms that that have been put into place to assure the financial well-being of your local government;

❑ Planning and land-use procedures and regulations;

❑ Environmental standards and regulatory mechanisms that have been enacted to secure the future of your natural resources;

❑ The status of your local government's initiatives to assure openness, transparency, inclusion, accountability, involvement of local citizens, and other worthy principles that define good governance; and

❑ The extent to which your local government has entered into formal and informal relationships with surrounding local authorities; neighbourhood governments; third sector organisations, like NGOs and community-based organisations; associations of governments; the private sector; labour unions and employee associations; and more.

You could easily become overwhelmed by the amount of learning required to function effectively as a local elected official. Fortunately, there are ways to conserve one's time and energies when it comes to improving your competencies as an elected official.

First, put priorities on those things you believe are important to learn.

Second, make a concerted effort to learn and apply the competencies covered in these materials. We believe you will be amazed at how mastering the competencies covered by this series will enrich your experience as a local elected leader. Furthermore, they will save you valuable time in the performance of your elected leadership duties and

responsibilities. For example, learning how to facilitate more effective meetings can be a great time saver.

Finally, resist the temptation to get immersed in the administrative details of local government operations unless the size of your local government is so small that you have no other choice.

Does the size of your local government make a difference?

Before we close this introductory discussion we want to mention two concerns that came up during the initial field-test of these materials many years ago and that are still relevant. Does the size and complexity of your local government make any difference in what you need to know about the elected leadership roles and competencies that were just outlined? Or should these factors influence the way training for local elected leaders should be conducted?

First, we believe the roles and competencies required of local elected leadership are the same regardless of the size of your jurisdiction. The way you carry them out may be influenced by the size and complexity of your constituency. But, we believe the knowledge and skills you will gain from an intensive training programme based on these materials will enhance your leadership abilities both within council and with the community.

The manner in which you and other men and women elected to local government are trained in your respective countries is not for us to dictate. These are decisions best left to those who will be organising and conducting the training. They may want to hold separate training workshops for those from the larger cities and those representing the smaller communities. On the other hand, elected leaders in an area with both large and small local authorities may believe they can benefit from attending workshops together regardless of the size of the constituencies they each represent. They may see the training as a way of addressing regional problems that require understanding and action by all local authorities regardless of size.

The position of elected representative carries with it certain responsibilities regardless of the size of your constituency. The way you apply the knowledge and skills associated with the roles and competencies described briefly in this introduction will be dictated, in large measure, by the resources you have at your command and the magnitude of the challenges you face as a local elected leader.

An introductory conclusion

This *Introduction to the Local Elected Leadership Series* was not only designed to introduce you to the series but to entice you to join a small group of your elected colleagues in an important voyage of discovery. A systematic voyage of discovery through the roles and competencies described in these chapters will make your public service as an elected leader both easier and more challenging. You will learn how to be more decisive, use power more judiciously, enable others in your community to assume greater responsibilities, become a better communicator, facilitate great meetings, understand what policy making is really all about, negotiate, and engage in challenging financing, overseeing and institution-building activities in ways you never thought were possible. When all these competencies are enhanced through the training, you will be a better representative of all the people and an elected leader, par excellence.

Key points

❑ This new edition of the Local Elected Leadership Training Series is based on more than a decade of success world-wide and the input of many discerning and helpful users.

❑ The working environment of the local elected official has become increasingly more complex and challenging over the past decade.

❑ Issues of sustainability, diversity, transparency, equity, civic engagement and participation, and accountability are amongst the many qualities that citizens expect from their local governments.

❑ These qualities not only define the effectiveness of local elected leadership, they represent the standards by which citizens hold their public officials accountable.

❑ These training materials are based on an expansive set of assumptions about your roles and responsibilities as local elected officials and how training can help you and others become more effective community leaders.

❑ Aspects of the layout, labels, and language used in this series are different from the initial edition. If you are not clear what these are, return to Page 11 immediately for another short briefing.

❑ Proverbs, metaphors, reflection opportunities, and governance tools are amongst the learning devices you will encounter on your voyage of discovery. The trip will be much more

rewarding and fun if you stop for a while to ponder their worth.

❑ Contrary to all the labels about these learning materials being for local elected officials only, the opportunities for using them in other ways and with other audiences are only limited by your imagination.

❑ The series includes separate chapters on the penultimate elected official roles and responsibilities of *representation* and *leadership* and ten of the most important competencies required to carry them out.

❑ These competencies are: communicating, facilitating, using power, decision making, policy making, enabling, negotiating, financing, overseeing, and institution building.

❑ How well you perform in these roles and competencies will determine how well you are judged by those you serve, the citizens of your community.

NOTE! Many of the tools in each of the chapters in Volume 4, as well as many of the *Reflection* exercises in this volume (Volume 3), can be used as on-the-job tools for policy and management development within your governing body, your local government organization, and in your community. So, each of you are urged to think outside the box when it comes to making full use of these materials.

A reflective opportunity

To help you get ready to take on this important learning opportunity, we suggest you complete the following *reflective-governance* questionnaire. It will help you assess how well you believe you currently carry out the various competencies as they relate to your representation and leadership roles and responsibilities as a local elected official

We have also included another questionnaire based on how well one or more of your close colleagues think you perform in each of these competencies. Once you have completed the self-assessment satisfaction survey, you might want to give a copy of the *Another Perspective on My Competency Performance* questionnaire to one or more of your close colleagues and ask them to rate your performance in each of these competencies. It's a way of checking to see if your satisfaction of how well you are doing in each of the competencies conforms to the perceptions of others who have had opportunities to see you perform as an elected official.

The role and competency performance satisfaction self-assessment inquiry

Name: ....;   Date: ....;

Local Government:.............................

Task One: For each of the two local elected official roles and ten competencies, we have provided a five point scale to help you assess how satisfied you are in performing the role or using the competency in your performance as a local elected official. There are no scientific answers to these questions, only your honest opinion about how satisfied you are in using each of these competencies and skills.

> In the following questionnaire:
> 1 = Very dissatisfied with my performance
> 2 = Somewhat dissatisfied
> 3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
> 4 = Somewhat satisfied
> 5 = Very satisfied

Circle the number that best illustrates your level of satisfaction in using each of the competencies and fulfilling the two roles.

1. My level of satisfaction in using my **Communicating** competencies which involve giving and receiving information, ideas, and feelings with accuracy and understanding is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

2. My level of satisfaction in using my **Facilitating** competencies which include such activities as fostering collective effort, helping others solve problems, ensuring that committee meetings are productive, and managing various kinds of inter-personal and inter-group conflict is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

3. My level of satisfaction in **Using Power** which involves using my personal and position-related sources of power to get things done is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

4. My level of satisfaction in using my **Decision Making** competencies which involve deciding how I will act when there is an option to be determined or a choice to be made is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

5. My level of satisfaction in using my **Policy Making** competencies which involve understanding the need for new or improved formal elected body mandates, analysing the potential consequences of acting or not acting to establish these mandates, examining alternatives, and determining implementation strategies that will guide present and future actions to benefit the community is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

6. My level of satisfaction in using my **Enabling** competencies which provide the means for citizens, NGOs, neighbourhoods, private firms, and others to get things done is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

7. My level of satisfaction in using my **Negotiating** competencies which involve interacting with other individuals or parties who represent differing interests and positions when we all seek to do better than we could otherwise do through jointly agreed-upon actions is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

8. My level of satisfaction in using my **Financing** competencies which involve making decisions about raising, allocating, and expending the public funds of my local government is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

9. My level of satisfaction in using my **Overseeing** competencies to ensure that our elected body and the local government staff are doing the right things and performing these right things both effectively and efficiently is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

10. My level of satisfaction in using my **Institution Building** competencies to ensure that our elected council, as an institution; the local government organisation and staff; and key intergovernmental and community-based organisations with whom we work closely; are supported in their developmental needs and challenges is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

11. My level of satisfaction in carrying out my **Representation** role and responsibilities by representing the rights and obligations of all the citizens within our local government jurisdiction is:

    1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

12. My level of satisfaction in providing overall **Leadership** to my constituents and community as measured by immediate results and the long-term consequences of my public service as a local elected official is:

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

Task Two: Tally up the individual scores and enter the total score here:____.

Task Three: Return to the questions and reread them again. This time mark with an X the level of satisfaction you would like to achieve in each of these competencies and roles within the next ____ months. The differences in each of the scores, if any, represent the professional development goals you want to achieve within the time period you stated in the last sentence.

Task Four: Tally up the individual X scores and enter the total score here:

Task Five: Calculate the difference between Task Two and Four scores, and enter the difference here: ____. This represents your total **Professional Development Challenge** for the time period you have chosen.

Task Six: For each of the ten elected leadership competencies and two major roles listed below, enter the numerical improvement you want to achieve within the time allotted. This score is the difference between how you have assessed your current level of satisfaction, and the goal you have set for improving your competence in each category. After listing your professional development goal, state briefly what you plan to do to meet this goal. It could be to learn more about the competency so you better understand what is required to carry it out or to develop specific skills that will increase your competence in this area or to ask a colleague to monitor your behaviour and give you feedback.

        If you are either satisfied with your current performance in any of the categories or don't want to give it a professional development priority, skip it and go on to the next.

❑ **Communicating** competencies: My professional development goal: ___ points
  In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have chosen, I will:
  ....

❑ **Facilitating** competencies: My professional development goal: ____ points
  In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have chosen, I will:
  ....

❑ **Using Power** competencies: My professional development goal: ___ points
  In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have chosen, I will:

....
....

❏ **Decision Making** competencies: My professional development
goal: ____ points
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have
chosen, I will:

....
....

❏ **Policy Making** competencies: My professional development
goal: ____ points
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have
chosen, I will:

....
....
....

❏ **Enabling** competencies: My professional development goal:
____ points
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have
chosen, I will:

....
....
....

❏ **Negotiating** competencies: My professional development goal:
____ points
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have
chosen, I will:

....
....
....

❏ **Financing** competencies: My professional development goal:
____ points
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have
chosen, I will:

....
....
....

❏ **Overseeing** competencies: My professional development goal:
____ points
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have
chosen, I will:

....
....
....

❏ **Institution Building** competencies: My professional
development goal: ____ points
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have
chosen, I will:

....

....

❑ **Representation** role and responsibilities: My professional development goal: ____ points
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have chosen, I will:
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have chosen, I will:

....

....

❑ **Representation** role and responsibilities: My professional development goal: ____ points
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have chosen, I will:

....

....

...._

❑ **Leadership** role and responsibilities: My professional development goal: ___ points
In order to achieve this goal within the time frame I have chosen, I will:

....

....

....

As we mentioned earlier, we are including another competency questionnaire that we encourage you to give to a close colleague or more so they can provide you with their insights and judgements about how well you are performing in each of these competency and roles. Don't hesitate to photocopy as many as you want to get other perspectives on your performance as an elected leader.

Another perspective on my competency performance

This questionnaire is designed to help you give constructive feedback on the performance of _____ in his or her local elected official role. The questionnaire is based on ten specific competencies associated with local elected leadership performance and the performance of two specific roles based on the application of the various competencies.

Task One: For each of the local elected official roles and competencies, we have provided a five point scale to help you assess how well you believe your colleague is performing in carrying out the role or in using the competency in

his or her performance as a local elected official. There are no scientific answers to these questions, only your honest opinions about how well this person performs in these competencies and roles. Your candid and fair assessments will be helpful to your colleague in his or her efforts to implement a professional development plan in the near future. Thank you.

In the following questionnaire:

1 = Cannot assess how well he or she is performing
2 = Performance in this area is poor
3 = Performance is fair
4 = Performance is good
5 = Performance is excellent

Circle the number that best illustrates your assessment of this man or woman's performance in each of the competency and role areas.

1.   My assessment of my colleague's performance in using **Communicating** competencies which involve giving and receiving information, ideas, and feelings with accuracy and understanding is:

1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

2.   My assessment of my colleague's performance in using **Facilitating** competencies which include such activities as fostering collective effort, helping others solve problems, ensuring that committee meetings are productive, and managing various kinds of inter-personal and inter-group conflict is:

1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

3.   My assessment of my colleague's performance in **Using Power** which involves using personal and position-related sources of power to get things done is:

1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

4.   My assessment of my colleague's performance in using **Decision Making** competencies which involve deciding how to act when there is an option to be determined or a choice to be made is:

1 ....   2 ....   3 ....   4 ....   5 ....

5.   My assessment of my colleague's performance in using **Policy Making** competencies which involve understanding the need for new or improved formal elected body mandates, analysing the potential consequences of acting or not acting to establish these mandates, examining alternatives, and determining implementation strategies that will guide present and future actions to benefit the community is:

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

6. My assessment of my colleague's performance in using **Enabling** competencies which provide the means for citizens, NGOs, neighbourhoods, private firms, and others to get things done is:

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

7. My assessment of my colleague's performance in using **Negotiating** competencies which involve interacting with other individuals or parties who represent differing interests and positions when they all seek to do better than they could otherwise do through jointly agreed-upon actions is:

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

8. My assessment of my colleague's performance in using **Financing** competencies which involve making decisions about raising, allocating, and expending the public funds of my local government is:

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

9. My assessment of my colleague's performance in using **Overseeing** competencies to ensure that the elected body and local government staff are doing the right things and performing these right things both effectively and efficiently is:

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

10. My assessment of my colleague's performance in using **Institution Building** competencies to ensure that his or her elected council, as an institution; the local government organisation and staff; and key intergovernmental and community-based organisations with whom they work closely; are supported in their developmental needs and challenges is:

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

11. My assessment of my colleague's performance in carrying out the **Representation** role and responsibilities, i.e., representing the rights and obligations of all the citizens within his or her local government jurisdiction is:

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

12. My assessment of my colleague's performance in providing overall **Leadership** to his or her constituents and community as measured by immediate results and the long-term consequences of my public service as a local elected official is:

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

Task Two: Tally up the individual scores and enter the total score here: ____.

Task Three: For each statement where you scored the man or woman's performance as either Fair or Poor, please identify that competency or role in the following space and provide some ideas about what your colleague might do to improve his or her performance as an elected official. Don't hesitate to use additional paper if needed.

Chapter 2:
The Representation Role and Competency

Introduction

If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies we are determined to forment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or representation.

**Abigail Adams, in a letter to her husband
John Adams, 2nd President of the United States of America
(March 31, 1776)**

We want to say a few words about the relevance of the above quotation. Abigail Adams was a feisty co-conspirator with her husband and others in the American colonies' fight for independence from the British in the latter half of the 18th century. Her husband, with a handful of other remarkable men of their time, was in Philadelphia drafting a declaration of independence. In spite of her fervent plea on behalf of women at this critical time, women in the United States did not get the right to vote until the early part of the twentieth century.

In that same letter she said, "Do not put unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could." A rather tough but prophetic statement, when we think about it. She could have been speaking for most women around the world when it comes to issues of representation. As you read this chapter, consider how women are represented both **within** your local government's political process and **by** your governing process. By the way, John Adams's career didn't suffer because his wife was a woman's rights activist. He became the second president of the newly constituted United States.

A reflective opportunity

Better yet, stop for a moment and jot down some reflections about the state of representation in your local government. How representative is your elected body of the overall population of your local government in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, economic status, geography, and other key considerations? Think about the various boards, commissions and other citizen bodies your elected council has created over the years to help you govern more effectively. How representative are they of various segments of your community? In the space below, record your thoughts about the under-representation that may exist on your elected body, and the official boards and commissions of citizens that serve your local government.

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Representation is not just the presence of individuals who **represent** various sub-populations within your local government jurisdiction. Representation is also a measure of how well those various sub-populations are **represented** in your elected body's decisions; the allocation of public resources; programmes and services delivered by your government; the ranks of your government's employees; and other ways you can measure *representation* performance. For each of these representation measures and others you think are important, grade your local government's performance.

  A = Excellent
  B = Good
  C = Average
  D = We need to call a special meeting of our elected body
       to discuss this and take actions to improve our
       representation performance.

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Representation: It's your most important, and most difficult, role

Representation is at the very core of local self-governance, democracy, and elected leadership. It is also the most problematic, difficult, and challenging aspect of your role as an elected official. Unfortunately, representation as the underlying operating principle and expectation associated with local self-governance is too often damaged by special interests, personal orientations to the world around us, and, on occasion, personal and collective greed.

How do you balance the interests of <u>all</u> your local government's citizens - men and women, young and old, rich and poor, with those who:

❑ live in your part of the community;
❑ were responsible for getting you elected;
❑ belong to the same political party;
❑ share many of your social and economic ties; and,
❑ in many cases, helped pay for your election.

These are the difficult, critical, and key choices that confront you constantly as an elected official. Your elected representation role and responsibilities are central to how effective, inclusive, open, accountable, and

trustworthy your local government is in its relationship with all of your citizens.

In most democratically elected governments, there are legal mechanisms, such as periodic elections, legal recourse when there is blatant misrepresentation, and various kinds of political pressures to foster and assure representation of all the citizens. But, we won't be talking very much about these in this chapter. Rather, we will take the high ground in this discussion about *representation* and treat it as a principle, value, and competency that will define your career and service as an elected leader.

> *The art of leadership is to act as a representative of a much larger constituency than those who voted for you.*
>
> **Sir Peter Parker, Former Chairman of British Rail**

What do we mean by representation?

You and your elected colleagues are responsible for carrying out the representational function of your local government. As men and women elected to office, you speak for your citizens and make decisions on their behalf. James Svara, a political scientist who has spent much of his career trying to understand the processes of local governance and helping others perform it more admirably, provides some valuable insights into the representation role. According to Svara, it helps to make a distinction between the legislative roles of *delegate* and *trustee.*

As delegates, elected representatives try to express as clearly as possible the opinions of their constituents and seek to be guided by them in making decisions. As trustees, elected representatives act in the interests of the community as a whole and use their judgment to do what they think is best for their constituents, whether the constituents are in agreement or not.[9]

As Svara points out, the *delegate* role depends on close interaction with your constituents and on the level, clarity and consistency of those interactions. It also depends on how you as the delegate, or elected official, define your constituency. If you have a strong orientation and commitment toward a special interest group, i.e. big business, the elderly, a particular neighbourhood, or some other identifiable group, this probably increases the likelihood that you will assume the delegate approach to your representation responsibility.

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[9] Svara, James H., *Official Leadership in the City*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.), p. 126.

When you take into consideration the needs of the entire community or local government and decide what you believe is the best course of action based on your judgment, experience and convictions, even when you believe your constituents may disagree, you are performing your representation role as a *trustee.* Svara also makes the point that many elected leaders combine the two representational approaches. He refers to these individuals as politicos. We suspect that most elected officials are politicos.

Representative and participatory democracy

There is another distinction that needs to be made before we launch into a full blown discussion of what your representation role and competency entails. You will, on occasion, hear the term "participatory democracy" as well as other terms used to define the governing process. Representative democracy is a form of democracy wherein voters choose representatives to act in their interests. It also assumes that these representatives are given enough authority to exercise initiative in the face of changing circumstances. We assume that you as an elected *representative* will be performing in both the delegate and trustee roles as just defined by James Svara.

The process of representative democracy has a couple of built in challenges for citizens who are supposedly represented under this form of government. If elections are based on partisan political interests, in other words, representatives are elected to represent different political parties or organisations, those citizens who support candidates who are not elected may find themselves and their interests not being represented. For those citizens whose candidates lost the current election it may seem like a long time until the next. The other challenge of representative democracy is when those who are elected decide that they have the mandate to act without consulting their constituencies.

Representative democracy came about for practical reasons. As populations grew and governance became more complicated, it became unrealistic for everyone to gather under some tree to make all those decisions that have to be made to sustain a viable government. Hence, *direct democracy* like the ancient Athenians liked to have others believe they practiced became a theory with little merit. The citizens of Athens over two centuries ago did participate directly in their government. However, only a few male elite were involved. So much for equity and inclusion under the terms of Athenian democracy.

As we said, the representation component of most democratic institutions can be hampered by partisan politics and representatives who think they only need to consult with citizens at election time. While we know the elected officials who are using this series could never be accused of such

unrepresentative behaviour, we did want to alert you that there are others out there who just might be so inclined.

These shortcomings to representative democracy have spawned a worldwide advocacy movement to assure that representative democracy is also **participatory democracy**. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia, defines participatory democracy as a broadly inclusive term for many kinds of consultative decision making in a democracy. Variations on this theme include anticipatory, consensus, deliberative, non-partisan, grassroots, and liquid democracy. Unfortunately, representative democracy is not always considered participatory, particularly by those who believe in greater consultation between the governing and the governed. This series of learning opportunities is devoted to the notion that *representative democracy should be synonymous with participatory democracy.* Keep this in mind as we delve more deeply into what your representation role and competency is all about.

A reflective opportunity

Before moving on to the specific activities that define a functioning representative democracy, take a moment to reflect on the participatory aspects of your representative form of governance. How widespread is the involvement of citizens from different income groups and different ethnic or racial groups in your governing process between elections? What might you and your elected colleagues do to make your representative democracy more participatory?

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Representation in action

Representation involves a number of specific kinds of activities, and they in turn help determine the approaches elected officials take toward this role responsibility.

❑ **The first activity is the development and enforcement of local government policies.** For example, as an elected official you may take a strong *delegate* stand on economic development, favouring certain large business constituents while ignoring the concerns of environmentalists. Or, acting as *trustee*, you may promote anti-discrimination legislation that assures fair

and equal treatment of all citizens within your community regardless of gender, race, religion, or economic status. The *Policy Making* competency, covered in Chapter 7, is designed to help you better understand how to manage this aspect of your representation role.

❑ **The second representation activity involves the allocation of public goods and services.** For example, public contracts might be awarded to certain firms or groups within your community based on their support of certain elected officials. In these cases, the elected officials are most likely acting in the role of *delegate.* Or, you decide to locate public facilities such as schools or health facilities based on demonstrated and documented need whether or not certain constituents agree. Based on Svara's model of representation, you would be acting in the role of *trustee.* If a contract is let to the largest contributor of the political party in control of your elected body at that time and is based on solid evidence of need for the facility and the demonstrated capacity and reputation of the contributor, then Svara would say your elected body is operating in the politico mode of representation. Among those elected leadership competencies that can help in your allocation-of-scarce-resources representational responses are: *Decision Making* (Chapter 6); *Financing* (Chapter 10), *Using Power* (Chapter 5); and *Negotiating* (Chapter 9).

❑ **Representation often involves intervening in the local governing system to assist individuals or groups in their interactions with local government staff and service deliverers.** It may be that you and your elected colleagues, as *delegates,* are particularly adept in assuring that **your** constituents are getting more than their fair share of the services offered. The *trustee* on the other hand fights to assure that all citizens are represented equally in gaining access to local government staff and resources. Elected leadership competencies that will help you be more successful in these kinds of representational situations include: *Communicating* (Chapter 3); *Overseeing* (Chapter 11); and *Institution Building* (Chapter 12).

❑ Finally, **representation involves continuous dialogue with all constituents of your community.** These may include special interest groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community based organisations, those parts of your community that lack the resources to mobilise their collective voices so they can be heard, religious and ethnic groups, your political party affiliations if they exist, private sector interests and resources, and, of course, the individual man and woman. Individual and collective competencies of elected leadership that will help you in these multi-faceted dialogues include: *Communicating and Negotiating,* already mentioned,

and those all-purpose competencies of *Facilitating* (Chapter 4) and *Enabling* (Chapter 8).

You may be surprised that carrying out your *representation* role and responsibilities involves all the competencies we have included in this series. For example, you may be thinking, "What does *institution building* have to do with representation?" Quite a lot, as we think about it. Your local government employees may not have the level of knowledge, insights, skills and attitudes needed to be every citizen's trustee. The institution building competency will help you understand how you can help strengthen your local government management and delivery systems. Representation is not just your sole responsibility as an elected official even though you are the citizen's elected *representative.*

Having a well informed and trained workforce is also key to your local government's representation responsibilities. A well thought-out and supported institution building plan for your local government can:

❏ assist employees in understanding the importance of delivering services based on criteria like equity and human need,

❏ provide them with communication and facilitating skills to help them interact more effectively with local citizens and organised groups in the community, and

❏ develop the resources needed to deliver services in an equitable, effective, and inclusive manner.

All of the competencies in this series are designed to help you carry out your two most important roles as a local elected official: representation and leadership. But your achievement and success in performing both of these roles and responsibilities is also dependent on the quality and performance of your staff and employees. This is why institution building is so important and why these training materials can also be an important resource in helping your appointed officials and employees join you in fulfilling your representation role.

Representation: The basis for your legacy

There is a strange charm in the thoughts of a good legacy.

Miguel De Cervantes, 16th Century Spanish Writer

John Gardner, a long time and respected public servant, helps us understand the complexity and importance of the representation role. He also offers some insights into how you can cope with this complexity as an elected

official. We've taken the liberty to adjust a few of Gardner's terms in the following quotation to put the spotlight on elected leadership and the challenge of representation.

> Effective elected leaders deal not only with the explicit decisions of approving the budget or announcing a policy but also with that partly conscious, partly buried world of needs and hopes, ideals and symbols. They serve as models; they symbolise your local government's unity and identity; they retell the stories that carry shared meanings. Their exemplary impact is great. They provide messages to your citizens about what you are paying attention to, how you deal with critical incidents, in the correspondence between your words and acts, in the ethical tone of your behaviour.[10]

This up-lifting message speaks not only to the representation decisions that you and your elected colleagues make today, but to the legacy you will leave behind to guide future generations of local elected officials. The decisions you make will also provide important messages for your constituents, the citizens of your community. While all your citizens will not like some of your decisions as their elected representatives, they will find it easier to accept them if they are based on principle and the greater common good of the community.

One of the authors had an opportunity to return to a small city where he served as the city manager several decades earlier. In a conversation with the young mayor who now serves that community, the mayor spoke about the quality of elected leadership that the community experienced more than thirty years before and the critical decisions his elected predecessors had made during their service to the community. He recalled that some of the more important decisions they made ran counter to many of the special interest demands put on the elected officials at the time. In retrospect, those decisions resulted in long-term benefits to the community.

They established a process of dialogue with their counterpart elected officials in the five adjoining local governments, even though relationships among them were problematic at the time. The elected officials of these six local governments continue their shared leadership initiatives after more than thirty years and currently operate a variety of joint programmes and facilities that benefit all citizens within the region. As the mayor recalled, their decisions at the time were clearly out of step with what many citizens felt were in the best interests of the city. Nevertheless, those decisions became legend and serve as models for current elected decision making in that region.

Those elected officials in the role of trustees used their judgment and courage to do what they thought was best, not only for their own local

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[10] Gardner, John, On Leadership, (New York: The Free press, 1990) p. 29.

government and citizens, but for the governments and citizens of the larger community. Their actions symbolised the "partly conscious, partly buried world of needs and hopes, ideals and symbols" that Gardner refers in his statement about leadership. They also call to mind a comment made by Edmund Burke, the 18th century British statesman and orator, during a speech to the electors of the city of Bristol in November 1774.

> "Your representative owes you, not his industry only," Burke counselled, "but his judgement; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion."

In Svara's terms, Burke was telling the citizens of Bristol that they should expect their elected representatives not only to be their *delegates* but to act boldly as *trustees* for the greater good of their community. Often you as your constituent's elected representative are able to see the bigger picture. Your information base and experience gives you a unique advantage in making trustee-type decisions. When you make *trustee* decisions on behalf of all your citizens, you are demonstrating leadership qualities, and that is what representation is all about.

Why representation can be so difficult

The problems you face in representation are at least three-fold. **First, there are conflicting demands on your judgment and your decisions.** Often it is difficult and nearly impossible to weigh the benefits and liabilities that will accrue to you and the community given one decision over another or one in relation to many others. Moreover, many of those conflicting demands will have political price tags attached. If the decision doesn't cost you your reputation and the next election, your political adversaries will see that retribution is levied. Conflicting demands, in many ways, provide the opportunity to rise above the fray and make decisions for the common good, not the vested interests. After all, you risk being pummelled by someone, whatever you do.

Second, there are often pluralistic pressures that pull you not just in two opposing directions but to numerous points around the political compass. These many-headed pressures make it almost impossible for a collective decision-making body like an urban council to reach a decision that will assure smooth implementation by their local government organisation and staff. Even though you reach a decision on an issue where there are conflicting special interests, it may be difficult for your municipal organisation to implement it effectively. A policy that is nearly impossible to implement is a hollow victory for policy makers. In these cases, it's prudent to go back to the drawing board or wait until the timing is more favourable to all concerned.

Lastly, we live in a world where no one is "in charge." No one is "in charge," that is, of those public problems that tend to gallop across geographic and geopolitical boundaries like a herd of wild antelopes. John Bryson and Barbara Crosby, authors of Leadership for the Common Good explain why:

No one organisation or institution is in a position to find and implement solutions to the problems that confront us as a society. No one is "in charge" when it comes to helping the crack babies, the homeless, the substance abusers, the sick, and the disenfranchised. No one alone can decrease crime, restore economically ravaged inner cities and small towns, reduce government deficits, or reverse environmental damage. In order to marshal the legitimacy, power, authority, and knowledge required to tackle any major issue, organisations and institutions must join forces in a "shared-power" world. In this world, organisations and institutions that share objectives must also partly share resources and authority in order to achieve their collective goals.[11]

Bryson and Crosby define shared power as shared capabilities exercised in interaction between or among actors to further achievement of their separate and joint aims.[12]

When you consider that you operate in a constituent environment where there are conflicting demands, pluralistic pressures, and virtually no one in charge, it's difficult to imagine how you can possibly carry out your representation role with any sense of effectiveness. Take heart. There is light at the end of this dark and foreboding tunnel.

The good news: Representation is not a one-way process

You can't clap with one hand only.

Chinese proverb

Representation suggests a one-way flow of information, services, goods, and whatever else the people's representatives in government can offer their diverse communities. While this may be the case in some authoritarian forms of government, it's not the case within a well functioning, local self-governance process. The local government that works best is one that

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[11] Bryson, John and Barbara Crosby, *Leadership for the Common Good.* (San Francisco: Jossey –Bass Publishers, 1992.) p. 4.

[12] Bryson, John and Barbara Crosby, p.13

engages in a constant flow of information, ideas, and resources in all directions, not just from the *governing* elite to the *governed* masses.

In order to better understand the importance and vitality of representation built on partnerships between local elected officials, their operating organisations, and their constituents, we want to return to those generally accepted principles of good governance discussed in the Introduction to this series. As we look at these principles from the perspective of *representation,* it is helpful to keep two important factors in mind.

1. Your effectiveness as elected men and women in fulfilling your representation role and responsibilities is largely dependent on the will and capacity of your local government organisation and staff to respond to constituent needs and interests.

2. Your constituents are a highly diversified and eclectic mix of individuals and institutions. Among them are ordinary people who are often unorganised and therefore under-represented; special interest groups that cut across the spectrum of private enterprises, religious and ethnic institutions, and non-governmental and community-based organisations; and other public institutions within your political jurisdiction and beyond.

A reflective opportunity

This is a good time to stop for a moment and reflect on who it is that you interact with as an elected official. Take a few moments and jot down the individuals and groups with whom you most frequently hold discussions within your official responsibilities as an elected official.

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How representative are they of the entire citizenry of the local government you serve?

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What are some things you can do to increase the depth and breadth of your representation?

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How effective do you believe your appointed officials and local government staff are in fulfilling their representation roles and responsibilities?

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What might be done to increase their representation competencies and performance?

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Good governance and representation

We make the path by walking it.

Motto of the Mondragon Cooperative in Spain

Let's review some of the accepted principles of good governance from the perspective of *representation.*

❑ **Civic engagement, citizenship, and participation:** Don't be confused by the many labels used to describe this phenomenon of local self-governance these days. By whatever label, we are talking about the active involvement of individuals; clusters of citizens; other public institutions; private, non-governmental and community-based organisations; and coalitions of willing partners in the governing process. The participation and engagement of these collections of citizens, groups and institutions is fundamental to effective representation. This is what makes the representation process multi-directional and not one-way. We will return to this principle later when we discuss representation strategies.

❑ **Respect for the law or the rule of law.** Representation that ignores this principle is perhaps the biggest threat to the integrity of your local government and its long-term vitality. We are talking about corruption from bribing key elected and appointed officials to "greasing the hand" of the building inspector. Corruption undermines the principle and practice of elected representation more than any other factor. When representation goes to the highest briber, democratic self-

governance no longer exists. Fortunately, there is increasing awareness about the corrosive nature of corruption, and public officials and citizens are mobilising to fight it at all levels of governance. Representation is dependent on governing by the rule of law.

❏ **Equity and inclusiveness:** The denial or inattention to these principles of good governance make a mockery of representation. However, there is good news to report. Local elected leaders and those who manage their public programmes and services have become increasingly aware and vigilant about the importance of assuring equal access to decision-making processes and the basic necessities of community life to all their citizens. As a local elected official, you need to ask yourself and your colleagues these questions on a regular basis:

- Are we doing everything we can to assure that all citizens, rich and poor are being treated fairly and equally?
- Are we in any way discriminating against any segment of our community in the policies we proclaim and the programmes and services we deliver?
- Does every citizen have full and unfettered access to the decision-making processes of our local government?

These questions, of course, only take a top-down, rather paternalistic view of elected officials and your role of representation. Recognising that representation is a reciprocal venture, what are some of the bottom-up benefits of equity and inclusiveness to elected officials and the local government as an institution? These governing qualities when put into practice assure a rich flow of information, ideas and insights from all your citizens about their needs and aspirations. More importantly, they reveal your citizens as potential resources and partners in the governing and operation of your local government.

❏ **Transparency and accountability:** As citizens, it is difficult to know whether we are being represented fairly or equally when we don't have access to public information, when we don't know how decisions are made, and when we are not able to hold our elected and appointed officials accountable. Representation thrives on transparency and accountability provided these values and strategies flow both ways in citizen-elected leadership relationships.

❏ **Effectiveness and efficiency:** You're probably asking, "What do these two principles have to do with representation?" Quite a lot. Let's see if we can explain why.

- *Effectiveness* involves "doing the right things" as a local government, and doing the right things is central to representation. For example, if you have street children in your community and you have developed programmes to

assure their safety, alternative educational opportunities, and reasonable well-being, your local government is being *effective.*

- *Efficiency* involves "doing things right." If your local government has sub-contracted some of these services out to a local NGO that specialises in working with children, and the costs are less, and the level of services better than your local government could provide through its own staff, then your local government is being *efficient.*

While effectiveness and efficiency are most often associated with management practices, they define the quality of much of what you do in carrying out your representation role as an elected official. And they convey the important role of your local government organisation and employees when it comes to representation.

One other good governance principle we haven't mentioned is something the UN-HABITAT Global Campaign on Urban Governance calls *Subsidiarity.* In operational terms, it means the devolution of authority and resources to the closest appropriate level consistent with efficiency and cost-effective delivery of services. From a management point of view, subsidiarity is delegation and a whole lot easier to spell and explain. We will discuss some interesting ways to engage in "subsidiarity" later, but for now, let's see how it fits with the elected leadership role of representation.

One of the most effective ways to declare your "representation" commitment is to equip your local government so it can function at the closest appropriate level of operation possible to all your citizens. Operationally, this translates into mechanisms like neighbourhood policing, localised social service programmes such as those that address violence against women and girls, and something called neighbourhood city halls. From a governance perspective, it is setting in motion processes like participatory budgeting and planning. The city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, for example, involves more than 45,000 citizens in the development of its annual budget.

Representation is not confined to direct contacts between you as an elected official and your citizen constituents although this is important. Representation also means:

- ❏ mobilising your local government organisation to foster greater citizen involvement,
- ❏ establishing policies that assure transparency and accountability between your government and its citizens,
- ❏ allocating necessary resources to support delegation of responsibilities to lower levels of implementation,
- ❏ establishing networks of communication, and
- ❏ enabling others in your community to assume more responsibilities for their well-being.

In other words, if you, as an elected official, are going to fulfil your *representation* responsibilities, you will need to call upon a wide range of individual and institutional competencies like those covered in the next ten chapters in this series.

Representation, advocacy, and inquiry

We want to shift the discussion to what we think is one of the more revealing and useful strategies associated with representation: balancing advocacy and inquiry. This is a set of conversational tools based on a model author Peter Senge discusses in one of his earlier books, *The Fifth Discipline.* It's based on the idea that managers and elected officials are advocates. They are often forceful proponents of positions and have the skills to influence others. After all, you probably wouldn't be an elected official if you weren't advocating various positions and values in relation to the well-being of your community.

But advocacy without input and feedback from others, Senge would argue, can be counterproductive. What you as an elected official need to do is balance your advocacy with inquiry, a dialogue that promotes collaborative learning. From the perspective of representation, this process assures that you and your elected colleagues can refocus your policies, programmes, and actions based on an on-going dialogue with your citizen constituents.

Balancing advocacy and inquiry involves, among other things, making your thinking processes and those of your constituents more visible or in other words, getting them out in the open where both can be examined through enlightened conversation. Here are some of the conversational tools involved in balancing advocacy with inquiry that Rick Ross and Charlotte Roberts describe in their article *Balancing Advocacy and Inquiry.*[13]

As an elected official, you can improve your advocacy position by:
- ❑ Stating the assumptions behind your position and describing how you arrived at your position using data, facts, and other concrete information;
- ❑ Explaining the assumptions underlying your position;
- ❑ Being more explicit about how you arrived at this point of view;
- ❑ Elaborating your point of view by explaining who will be affected, how they will be affected, and why;
- ❑ Providing concrete examples, if possible, and hypothetical ones if you are operating in new territory; and
- ❑ Trying to imagine your constituent's perspective on what you are saying.

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[13] Senge, Peter, Charlotte Roberts, Richard B. Ross, Bryan J. Smith, and Art Kleiner, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization.* (New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1994.) pp.256-7.

Test your conclusions and assumptions by:

❑ Encouraging your constituent(s) to explore your ideas, assumptions and data;

❑ Not being too defensive, particularly if your political opponent is in the audience;

❑ Indicating where you are least clear in your thinking about the position you are advocating and asking for their input; and

❑ Listening actively, remaining open, and encouraging others to put forth their views.

Finally, balance your advocacy with a healthy dose of inquiry by:

❑ Helping your constituent(s) explore their own reasoning on the topic;

❑ Explaining why you are interested in their points of view;

❑ Testing what they are saying by asking open ended questions;

❑ Checking to see if you really understand what they are saying; and

❑ Listening for new understanding which hopefully moves both of you to a higher level of insight and appreciation of each other's points of view.

Obviously, this is not a "you talk at them and then they talk at you" set of deadly monologues. What we have outlined are guidelines for directing a conversation with your constituents that not only presents your point of view (advocacy), but also infuses it with deeper understanding and new ideas on the part of both you and your constituents (inquiry). As we said earlier, representation is not a one-way process. (See Chapter 2: Communicating for more practical advocacy and inquiry tools.)

Representation is not limited to elected officials

He who would do great things should not attempt them all alone.

Seneca, Roman statesman

While representation is at the heart of being an elected *representative* and one of your major responsibilities as an elected official, you are supported in these initiatives by a network of representation-fulfilling resources. Some of these you have influence on, even control over, as an elected official. Other representation initiatives may erupt as a counter-movement from the community. These can come in a variety of ways. But usually citizens are unhappy about the quality and extent of representation from their local

government and its elected officials. Citizen reactions can range from removal of an elected official at the next election to riots in the streets.

It is important to recognise that representation falls into several categories of initiators. Here are some examples of how the function of representation gets implemented at the local level of governance in a democratic society.

❑ You, as an elected man or woman, have direct control over some of the representation tools, i.e., your right, opportunities, and elected responsibility to communicate directly with citizens as an elected official and to advocate issues of representation as a member of the elected council.

❑ Your local elected body theoretically has the most power and influence at the local level to assure that the principles and practices of representation are implemented. Foremost are your legislative powers to establish policies and allocates scarce resources. Every formal act of governance your elected body takes should be subject to some kind of explicit representation test to determine who benefits and who doesn't. Representation doesn't stop with the actions of individual elected officials or the elected body as a whole. There are other mechanisms and resources to assure representation.

❑ Many elected bodies work through committees to fulfil their elected responsibilities. A designated committee of the full elected body, such as a *Committee on Social Welfare*, might recommend starting a pre-school program in an underserved ethnic community. Such committees, because they have specific, targeted responsibilities, are in a position to safeguard the representation aspects of the functions for which they are responsible.

❑ Your elected body controls significant community resources that have responsibilities to assure representation. The most obvious and important is the local government organisation that is responsible for planning and delivering public programmes and services. For example, your elected body might instruct your chief executive officer, public safety director, and staff to develop and implement a safe streets program involving local police and male and female volunteers. Your decision is based on a request from the citizens of a low income neighbourhood that has a higher than average crime rate.

The physical evidence of your representation mandate and intentions are most often delivered by your local government appointed officials and staff. In most cases, the quality and fairness of your representation will be judged on the streets of your community, not in the elected council chambers where you preside.

❏ Often, local governments establish semi-public mechanisms to carry out specific tasks and responsibilities. These, most typically, involve the operation of public utilities or large public infrastructure investments, i.e., water systems and housing for lower income families. These quasi-public bodies most likely operate under a broad mandate from your elected leadership. In reality, you have delegated authority for representation to these bodies. Your ability to assure that their actions meet your elected body's definition of responsible representation is greatly diminished. In reality, the policy boards and managers of these semi-public authorities may resent any oversight you and your colleagues try to provide. Here's a hypothetical example to make this point more clear.

The director of one of the most influential NGOs in your country has accused your municipality of not representing the interests of "their constituents" in providing water services to a squatter settlement on the fringes of the municipality. Your mayor, in turn, orders the water authority to do something about the mess but it responds by saying it doesn't have the resources. The citizens are threatening to riot because they have no influence or elected representation. Your representation role and responsibilities as an elected official are being diffused, if not negated. To the citizens, it often looks like no one is in charge.

❏ Your representation role as an elected official gets even more interesting, challenging, and frustrating. For example, an angry mob of people has demanded that your local government take action to stop the destruction of trees in your central business district and to halt the development of a major traffic artery. They have interrupted your scheduled council meetings with their protests and threatened to campaign against several of your elected colleagues at the next election.

As you can see, representation is a shared responsibility, even though you and your elected colleagues are the citizens' elected representatives. While your representation role begins with a very personal commitment to serve your constituents, it becomes less personal and more bureaucratic as the organisation and programme resources you govern assume more of your representation responsibilities. As the public service delivery systems become more complex and complicated and less in your direct control, your ability to assure your constituent citizens of their representation rights is further diminished. Frustrating, isn't it?

It becomes even more frustrating when some non-elected official, like the NGO director in our example, begins to talk about "his constituents" when you thought you and your elected colleagues were the only individuals with authorized, by-the-ballot, representation rights and responsibilities.

And then, the citizens, young and old start to exercise their representation rights by imposing grassroots democracy principles and

practices on their elected officials. One of the authors was directly involved in the angry citizens/tree episode mentioned above. When a few tree-loving citizens took up residency in five trees scheduled to be cut down to widen an intersection, it all looked rather humorous. Unfortunately, it turned into a major political confrontation for the elected officials who decided it was their duty and responsibility to assure the motorists safer and more efficient traffic flow within the central business district. Most of the elected officials who were in office during this citizen confrontation were voted out of office in the election that followed. Many attributed their demise to the tree-hugging constituents.

Representation truths and consequences

If you let me set the constraints, I'll let you make the decisions.

Herbert Simon,Contemporary American Management Theoretician

Many decades ago there was a popular television show in the United States called *Truth* or *Consequences.* It came to mind as we were struggling with this difficult subject and how best to explore its many challenges from your perspective. Responsible representation, as an elected official, is not a matter of truth or consequences, but truth**s and** consequences. Let's see if we can explain this riddle of terms.

The truths:
- ❏ You represent many competing interests: economic, social, religious, ethnic, gender and age related, and geographically located, to name some of the more important and interesting variables.
- ❏ These competing interests often find it difficult to see the big picture, which must be your perspective as an elected official. After all, you and your elected colleagues represent all the citizens of the community.
- ❏ There are not enough public resources to meet all the needs and interests of all your citizens. As their elected representatives, you and your elected colleagues must decide how to allocate these scarce resources among the many competing interests.

The consequences:

❑ Whatever your decisions are, there will be constituents who will be unhappy.

❑ Many constituents will believe they are either under-represented by your decisions or not represented at all.

❑ Your decisions may need to take into consideration citizens you don't represent, non-citizens of your community. For example, there may be the need for inter-jurisdictional decisions on such issues as water, traffic flow, or environmental protection.

❑ Your decisions may require that you balance short-term needs with long-term consequences, and relative costs with benefits to be realised.

As you can see, representation is not only a role and responsibility that you share with many other individuals, groups, and institutions; it is also a role and responsibility that embodies many truths and *consequences.* As Peter Block would remind us, *the choices you offer your constituents are what creates accountability.*

Strategies and tactics to enhance representation

All of the competencies covered in this elected leadership training series encompass representation strategies and tactics. Communicating, facilitating, enabling, financing, negotiating, overseeing, institution building, financing, using your power, and making quality decisions all have direct links to representation. While we will provide more in-depth ideas and examples about how to strengthen and use each of these competencies in the competency chapters, we want to end this discussion with some ideas about how you and your elected colleagues can exercise your representation responsibilities.

Probably your best representation strategies involve building partnerships or working at the grassroots level to deliver public programmes and services. Partnerships can be almost as diverse as your imagination allows. They can be with other local government units, private sector firms, non-governmental and community-based organisations, schools, religious institutions, combinations of these organised entities, or collections of like-minded citizens. Grassroots government, on the other hand, involves mechanisms like neighbourhood city halls, participatory planning and budgeting sessions at the local level, and neighbourhood policing and other localised service delivery mechanisms.

Partnerships

Partnerships come in many configurations as we just mentioned. In an in-depth look at over fifty successful community partnerships, researchers David Chrislip and Carl Larson identified these basic conditions that contributed to their successes.

1   **Create broad-based involvement:** Reach into every segment of the community you expect to serve as well as those who will be affected by what you want to do. Get them involved in the initial planning and decision making. Don't wait until you are ready for implementation to get them involved. One of the participants in one of the partnerships they researched made an interesting comment. "Our philosophy is, 'If you have the men and women around the table who can make things happen and those who can stop it from happening then it will happen.'" What an insightful comment. Too often we try to avoid those who we think might stand in our way. It only strengthens their resistance. Besides, we are talking about representation, not a meeting of the convinced.

2.   **Get to know each other and do some social contracting:** Before jumping into the fray of why you want to form a partnership, what these researchers call collaboration, put some energy into getting to know each other. Discuss each others interests, what they want to achieve, what personal resources they bring to the new partnership, their values, hopes, and, yes, concerns. It is important to establish a level of trust before delving into the midst of the new challenge.

3.   **Create a credible, open process:** If your culture is like ours, there may be a bit of cynicism and mistrust about what local governments are trying to do. Who is really behind the idea that we should form this partnership? And, of course, what's in it for them? Have the important decisions already been made which puts us in the role of "rubberstamping" someone else's idea? This is where the good governance principles of openness and transparency come into play. By getting people from all aspects of the community involved, you send a strong message that your process is open and that it will be credible. Backroom political deal-making has no place in this kind of process.

4.   **Promote visible support from acknowledged leaders in the community:** Hopefully, this means you and your elected colleagues. In most successful partnerships, there are individuals who act as catalysts. They have a vision, inspire imagination, and possess high energy to keep things going. These kinds of community-based ventures rarely start out with their leadership already identified. In fact, that is often a disadvantage in forging partnerships at the grassroots level of governance. Leaders who will be acknowledged rightfully by those they serve will evolve from the process. The process establishes a new level of representation.

5.   **Gain the support of established authorities:** This means, in most cases, the local government's elected leadership - you and your elected

colleagues! Remember, we are talking about grassroots ventures. While you may be instrumental is planting the seeds of contemplation, we hope that these initiatives grow out of the community. This kind of top-down support for bottom-up initiatives may seem like a natural thing for elected officials and their operating friends to latch onto, but it doesn't always happen. There is always the "If it didn't come from us, it must be a rotten idea," or "We can see this as cutting into our official authority, and we can't have that!" Remember, representation goes in all directions, not just from the elected officials down to the masses.[14]

   While this kind of collaborative-partnering venture is best initiated from the ground up, this doesn't deny your involvement as an elected official or as an elected body. This is where the competencies we cover in this series on elected leadership come into play. You might f*acilitate* the initial meeting of a few insightful, or angry, citizens who want to make something happen in their neighbourhood. You can *enable* them to get organised by offering a public facility where they can meet. You might be called in to *negotiate* the boundaries between what they want to do and a possessive bureaucrat from city hall. Once they get near to putting their ideas into operation, they may need some *financing or overseeing* help. Of course, by doing these things you are fulfilling your representation role and exhibiting elected *leadership.* Congratulations.

   Before leaving the representation strategy of promoting partnerships, we want to call your attention to a valuable contribution to this discussion by the authors of *A Sourcebook for Municipal Capacity Building in Public-Private Partnerships.* While the authors are talking about large-scale partnerships, many of the principles identified as crucial to success are important to all kinds of partnerships, big and small. They include:

❑ Transparency: Keeping stakeholders informed and involved, curtailing corruption, and ensuring transparency.
❑ Accountability: Can you do what you said you would do?
❑ Legitimacy and legality: The rule of law even reaches down to community-based partnerships.
❑ Stakeholder participation: Know your stakeholders and keep them involved.
❑ Equity and inclusiveness: Does your partnership treat everyone equally? Is your process inclusive of all who can be involved who will contribute and benefit from your partnership?
❑ Empowerment: Will your partnership empower poor people, the disenfranchised, and the marginalised members of your community? [15]

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[14] Chrislip, David D. and Carl E. Larson, *Collaborative leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Can Make a Difference (San* Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994.), pp.75-88.

[15] Heymans, Chris, "*Establishing Sound Partnership Principles*" (Focusing Partnerships: A Sourcebook for Municipality Capacity-Building in Public-Private Partnerships. Ed. Janelle Plummer: London: Earthscan Publications, 2002, pp. 213-30.

We will return to this sourcebook in the enabling competency chapter so we can take advantage of the author's world-wide experiences in enabling successful partnerships.

Enhancing local self-governance through grassroots involvement

Representation really works when your citizens can see it, feel its presence, and get directly involved in making it happen. Again, we want to remind you that many of the ideas we will share with you about examples of representation are included in the other manuals. For example, we talk about the participatory budgeting and planning initiatives of the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, in Chapter 10: Financing. In addition to this world-class example of representation, here are some other ideas to ponder.

❑ In Mesa de los Hornos, a neighbourhood on the fringes of Mexico City, the municipal government is providing demand-driven technical assistance for planning and development of essential infrastructure improvements.

❑ In Germany, *Mothers' Centres* and *Mothers' Platforms* evolved from a grassroots effort to provide an alternative vehicle for mothers to get child development services and have an active political voice in their communities. While its energy comes from the resources and talents of women with children, it also opens official channels so they can gain access to a wider range of municipal and district councils and their programmes. Importantly, this model has wheels. It has been adopted by many mothers in western, central and eastern European countries.

❑ In the southern State of Kerala, India, municipal governments were having a difficult time communicating with the poor residents of their communities. With assistance from UNICEF, they developed something called the *Community Development Society (CDS).* CDS organises women in poor communities to make plans for local development. Self-elected committees run these groups, and their recommendations are often incorporated into the municipal budgets of their respective jurisdictions. While this process was initiated from the "top-down", it has created a "bottoms-up" network of communicators to help in the governance of their communities.

❑ In Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, eighty percent of the housing stock was destroyed during the recent war that ravaged that part of the world. The municipality of Sarajevo played a catalytic role in mobilising the citizens to reconstruct their own housing

rather than going in and doing it for them. The key was to identify the houses and provide titles to homeowners who were without legal ownership papers even before the war. A major side benefit was also realised in these initiatives. It fostered ethnic and social reconciliation in an urban community where the unifying social and economic fabric was in tatters.

❑ There is a movement in the United States to create deliberative forums and study circles at the local level of governance. Public deliberation is a means by which citizens make tough choices about basic purposes and directions for their communities. It is a means of reasoning and talking together. These forums are organised by a variety of initiators: libraries, community centres, civic associations, even local governments if they are so inclined. They are designed to raise awareness and explore options. They often lead to community action, but that's not the sole purpose. New knowledge, a heightened sense of civic responsibility, and engagement with one's neighbours concerning what is important to them are equally important reasons for engaging in public deliberation.

❑ In one of the poor sub-divisions of Cotonu, Benin, West Africa citizens were experiencing a huge gap in their local government's ability to fulfil its representation role and responsibilities. So, citizens waded into the void and took charge. It was a clear case of bottoms-up representation. They formed a team that went about consulting with a variety of elders, development association officials, and representatives of market women to get a sense of what was needed. The team established a community association with a permanent secretary, developed a plan of action, and made arrangements for basic service management and delivery. While this citizen initiative suggests a serious breakdown in local government leadership, think about the longer-term consequences. These citizens have managed to develop a new cadre of elected leaders who can take charge in the near future.[16]

Representation, as we said in the beginning, is probably the most difficult, challenging and important role you assume as an elected official. In fact, it is your mandate. While you have only a modest amount of direct control over how your local government's representation functions are ultimately implemented, it is obvious that you have many potential resources to help you in this role.

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[16] With the exception of the public deliberation example, these short case examples were taken from *Implementing the Habitat Agenda:* In Search of Urban Sustainability, published by the Development Planning Unit, University College London, 2001.

Key points

❏ Representation is the elected leader's most difficult and important role

❏ Representation is the measure of how well your local government serves all of its citizens in accordance with widely accepted principles of good governance.

❏ The representation roles of elected officials include those of *delegate, trustee* and their combination, *politico.*

❏ Representation involves the development and enforcement of policies, allocation of public goods and services, assisting citizens in their interactions with their local government, and keeping in touch with all citizens on a continuing basis.

❏ Effective representation is challenged by conflicting demands, pluralistic pressures, and problems with no one in charge of solving them.

❏ Representation is not a one-way process.

❏ Representation and good governance share common values: participation, respect for the law, equity and inclusiveness, transparency and accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, and subsidiarity.

❏ Representation requires a judicious balancing act between advocacy and inquiry on the part of elected officials.

❏ Representation involves not just elected officials but their appointed officials and staff, subsidiary organisations established by the local government, and those citizens and community institutions that exercise their representation rights through protest and other means of telling their local government that they are not being represented to their satisfaction.

❏ The truth is representation has consequences.

❏ Representation is enhanced through a rich network of partnerships which is different from a network of rich partnerships.

❏ It is also enhanced richly through grassroots involvement of all citizens - men and women, rich and poor, young and old, able-bodied and disabled, and from majority and minority groups.

Chapter 3:
The Communicating Competency

Introduction

Nature has given us one tongue, but two ears,
that we may hear from others

Epictetus, Roman Philosopher

I n Chapter II, we said representation is the elected men and women's most important role. While we don't want to be quite that dogmatic about which of the ten competencies is most important, we believe communicating is among the elected official's most important skills. Communicating is also at the heart of effective and responsible representation. Your ability to listen to your constituents, to speak out on their behalf, to represent their concerns in a spirited discussion with other elected officials, and to state clearly where you stand on important issues within the community are some of the qualities by which your public service as an elected official will be judged. They are also indicators of your communicating competencies.

Why your communicating competencies are so important

David Carnevale in his book *Trustworthy Government* defines communication as "an attempt to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity in a situation through the exchange of information and knowledge." [17]

He goes on to say that trust develops hand-in-hand with shared and truthful communication. And, shared information is vital to performance.

The elected men and women's communicating competencies are important for many positive reasons, which we will elaborate upon in a moment, but first let's look at the dark side of this important elected leadership competency. Let's be honest with each other. There is considerable deceit - or perhaps worse, perceptions of deceit - in public discourse. It is not unusual to pick up a newspaper or see an article on the internet that quotes some public opinion poll confirming citizen beliefs that their government engages in dishonest communication. Even as these thoughts are being composed, the veracity of our national leaders is being questioned at home and around the world.

In the discussion of this competency with members of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM), there were some tough words of advice about what should and should not be included in the revised chapter on communicating. In case you didn't read the forward to this new series, EGM was the group of

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[17] Carnevale, David G., *Trustworthy Government* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1995), p.97.

experts brought together by UN-HABITAT to offer insights and recommendations on the revision of the initial Elected Leadership Series.

One EGM participant said the communications essay in the initial chapter series was naïve. He felt it didn't accurately reflect the highly politicized process that characterizes how elected officials conduct their business in many local governments around the world. These were challenging words but, nevertheless, an example of honest and candid communication. Other members of the group spoke about *hidden agendas, mixed messages, verbal smoke screens,* and the general lack of openness that all-too-often characterises the way elected officials communicate, not only with the public but among themselves. The message was clear. Don't package this competency in fancy language that covers up the reality of how some elected officials communicate among their own members and with the public.

What to expect from this chapter

The experts who were advising UN HABITAT and their prospective authors on what to include in this chapter were very helpful. They said this chapter should:
- ❑ Put greater emphasis on interpersonal communicating skills including active listening, giving and receiving feedback, and that all-important skill of saying "no" and still getting re-elected;
- ❑ Include a discussion of the types of situations elected officials find themselves in, officially and otherwise, that require communicating competencies;
- ❑ Describe how communicating competencies relate to the principles of good governance; and
- ❑ Provide insights on how elected officials can raise their communication standards within the political process that is so important to democratic self-governance.

Communicating, trusting, and learning

Before we delve into these recommendations, we want to comment on the importance of the communicating competency as a learning tool. Learning, based on the use of these materials, is largely dependent on an exchange of information, ideas, insights, and opinions among participants involved in a group process. For learning opportunities to blossom and bear fruit for all participants in an elected leadership workshop, there must be a high level of trust among all participants and staff. And trust depends on a consistency in

communicating that assures participants they can exchange views, ideas, and even doubts and contradictions without fear of consequence. As Carnevale reminds us, trust is reciprocal, dependent on predictability, and built on our ability to engage in honest and authentic communication.

Since group learning is based on developing trust among the participants and staff and trust is integral to how we communicate with each other, it is critical that the communicating competency be reinforced early in any elected leadership training programme. In most of the elected leadership programmes that were conducted using the first edition of these training materials, the trainers and organisers of the training decided to make communications the first substantive skill building event. Without having a shared understanding of what constitutes effective interpersonal and group communication and the commitment and requisite skills to engage in meaningful dialogue, the subsequent learning opportunities within this series will fall short of their potential. Shared, caring, and truthful communication builds trust. Trust is a choice each of us makes to believe someone or something, like our local government. Trust is essential to individual and shared learning and to good governance.

Communicating, effective elected leadership, and good governance

While most of what we are about to say may seem like conventional wisdom, we think it is worth saying. Your communicating competencies, and we see them as encompassing several distinct skills, are key to how effective you are as an elected official when you make decisions, facilitate citizen or official meetings, use your personal sources of power, develop policies, negotiate among yourselves and with external groups, conduct your oversight responsibilities, and engage in institution building. In other words, all the other competencies you will want to strengthen and use as an elected leader are dependent on how well you communicate.

When we look at the principles of good governance, we find equally convincing reasons why communicating and the quality of the communication are so important. Let's take a look at these principles from the perspective of the communicating competency.

❑ *Civic engagement* involves multi-directional communicating processes. Your most important communicating skill when interacting with individuals, civic groups, business leaders, and indeed, all factions that make up your community, is active listening.

❑ *Respect for the rule of law* is fundamental to good governance. And, it's not just the elected official respecting the rule of law. It's also every man and women and collection of citizens

operating under some organizing format. They must also respect the rule of law. Dishonest communications, or public pronouncements that pump so much fog into the air that citizens are never sure what the intentions are behind the foggy message, are sure to erode public confidence and respect for the rule of law.

❑ *Transparency and accountability* are at the heart of what elected officials communicate and how they communicate. They are the touchstones on which trust is built between the elected and their electorate.

❑ *Equity and inclusiveness* are too often forgotten in the communicating that goes on between public officials and citizens. It is so easy to fall into the trap of communicating with those you feel most aligned or have long term relationships. Some of us find it difficult to communicate directly with those individuals and groups that represent different values, norms, religious beliefs, ethnic differences, economic status, or gender. The metaphor "good ole boys", used to describe those who ran many small towns in the western world, wasn't the figment of someone's imagination. How equitable and inclusive are you as an elected official? Do you tend to talk to the same people even though you may represent a wide diversity of constituents?

❑ The good governance principles of *effectiveness and efficiency are often* defined as doing the right things (effectiveness) and doing things right (efficiency). Efficiency is badly damaged, for example, when the elected body sends out mixed messages about how citizens should behave in paying taxes and service charges. Effectiveness suffers when inconsistencies exist between what an elected official says and does. Even the perception of deceit in public discourse diminishes the effectiveness of those who govern.

He who sows wind reaps a tempest.

Cuban proverb

Barriers to effective communication

As you can see, communications is an integral part of fulfilling your good governance mandate as an elected official. Unfortunately, there are some potential barriers you may have to contend with in assuring that what you say is what others hear and what you hear is what others wanted you to

hear. Here are just a few of them that can take the edge off your communicating competencies.

- ❑ Those you are communicating with may have different goals, values, and views from yours.
- ❑ Your experience may be very different from theirs, and you may fail to recognize these differences when you communicate with them.
- ❑ Your status as an elected official may intimidate those you are communicating with or even alienate them if they resent the authority you represent.
- ❑ Even the physical set-up where the communication takes place may be a barrier to communicating with understanding. For example, the formal layout of many formal governing council chambers can create both a physical and psychological barrier between elected officials and local citizens.

A reflective opportunity

Stop for a moment and reflect on how you feel about the ways you as an elected official communicate with other elected officials and with individuals. We've taken the liberty to provide a bit more structure to your thinking about these communications. We hope you don't mind.

With other elected officials:

Describe the quality of dialogue and communication between you and your elected peers. For example: Is it mostly honest? Is it formal and often not very enlightening? Is there a lot of political in-fighting that makes communicating difficult? Are elected officials supportive of each other regardless of political affiliation? Does this build trust? As you ponder these queries, what do you think might be done to improve the quality of communication between you and other elected officials?

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With citizens:

Do you tend to limit your communicating to those in the community whom you have known for a long time? Are most of your communications with certain segments of the community? How would you describe the quality of the communication that takes place between you and your constituents? What could you do to improve the level of communication between you and the community? What impact do you think the level of communication between your elected body and the people your larger community has on how they trust you and your elected colleagues?

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About those barriers: Before moving on, take another look at the barriers to effective communications mentioned earlier. How do these affect the communications you have with other elected officials, individuals, and other groups.

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What are some of the actions you might take to minimise these barriers?

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I would walk twenty miles to listen to my worst enemy if I could learn something.

Gottfried Leibniz, 17th Century Mathematician

Formal and not-so-formal communication links

There are many ways to communicate between local self-governments and local citizens. While the focus of this chapter is to develop communicating competencies of elected leaders, it is useful to see the bigger picture of communicating techniques and strategies that local governments and local citizens can use to communicate with each other. The following lists have been taken from an article on local government communication practices in

the Czech Republic.[18] They range from bureaucratically mundane to aggressively confrontational. They have been presented in a format that allows you to check whether or not the practice is one that has been used in your own jurisdiction. The more important issues to think about as you review these various communicating tools are the following: How effective do you think they are? Could some of the practices like public demonstrations be avoided through better communications between local government and citizens? What other options might be more effective in providing better governance at the local level?

Techniques used by citizens to communicate with local governments	Yes	No
Create citizen associations to represent and communicate citizen interests		
Create ad hoc citizen initiatives based on specific concerns		
Use of legal means to communicate concerns		
Preparation and presentation of formal petitions		
Public demonstrations		
Public protests such as blockades and occupation of public offices		
Lodging of formal complaints		
Submission of data and information on issues of concern		
Media publications		
Participation in special commissions and committees of the elected body		
Participation in political parties		
Participation in activities of lobbying groups		
Speaking at public meetings of the elected body		
Meeting with elected officials		
Writing to the elected body or representatives		
Conducting citizen opinion surveys		
Inviting public officials to attend local community functions		

Techniques used by elected officials to communicate with citizens	Yes	No
Public sessions of the elected body		
Targeted meetings with citizens		
Public discussions on important community issues		
Formal public hearings on specific issues		
Publication of elected-body meeting minutes		
Use of an official bulletin board		
Publication of bulletins and newsletters		
Answering correspondence		
Dealing with complaints		
Establishing visiting hours for communicating with citizens		
Issuing verbal reports		
Open door policy to meet with citizens		
Use of media to keep citizens informed		

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[18] Borecky, Jaroslav and Libor Prudky, *Public Perception of Local Government in the Czech Republic from Public Perception of Local Governments* edited by Pawel Swianiewicz (Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 2001) pp.108-10.

Web-sites and e-mail access		
Participating in community activities		
Surveys to determine the opinions of local citizens on various issues, programs, and policies		
Regular meetings with neighbourhood and special interest groups, i.e., business leaders or health providers		

Take a moment and add any other techniques or strategies that have been used in your local government to further communication from either citizen initiatives or local government-initiated efforts.

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Which of these various communicating approaches do you think are most effective and why?

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Which of these practices do you think could be improved upon or should be avoided?

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Stand in the light when you want to speak out.

Crow proverb, Native American tribe

Communication and gender

Before we discuss the interpersonal aspects of communications we want to look briefly at the differences between how women and men communicate. These differences could affect the overall performance of your governing body in many ways. The challenge for anyone who wants to understand issues of gender and communication, or write about them, is complicated by the myriad of cultural differences that define the turf between men and women. What may be seen as conventional wisdom in one society might be offensive in another. The good news is that cultures are constantly reinvented by those who live them. This is particularly true when it comes to issues of gender. Chinyere Okunna, a professor at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria, reminds us,

> Gender communication is intercultural communication. In every society, there are sufficient differences in the distinct behavioural patterns of men and women to qualify them as belonging to two different cultures/subcultures.[19]

While each elected official must strive to understand the cultural differences that exist within their working environment when it comes to communicating, there is growing evidence that some behavioural patterns between the sexes transcend cultural boundaries. For example, in a far reaching study conducted in fourteen countries on five continents it was determined that women are more likely to believe their circumstances are controlled by others while men are more likely to believe they can influence their circumstances and opportunities through their own actions.[20] Think about how these differences manifest themselves in how you and your elected colleagues communicate in formal meetings of your governing body. If these differences are characteristic of your own culture, they may have a profound effect on how effective women officials are in voicing their concerns, and votes, on certain issues that come before the governing body.

On the other hand, research by Cynthia Torppa and others indicate that women bring a particular strength to their communication with others that could be tapped by elected bodies in their deliberations. Torppa in reviewing a number of studies about gender and communication concludes that, "Women, to a greater extent than men, are sensitive to the interpersonal meanings that 'lie between the lines' in the messages they exchange with others…women expect relationships to be based on interdependence (mutual dependence) and cooperation while men typically expect relationships to be based on independence and competition. Women tend to be the relationship specialists and men tend to be the task specialists." [21]

Think about these gender differences in terms of your own experiences as an elected official. Do they make sense in how you and other elected officials communicate on policy issues, for example? Do they make a difference when citizens appear before your governing body for whatever reason? There is an old Japanese saying. *If you don't hear the story clearly, don't carry it off with you under your arm.* Hearing clearly also means being able to recognise and respect the differences in the ways that women and men express themselves.

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[19] Okunna, Chinyere, *Gender and Communication in Nigeria: Is This the Twenty-first Century?*, Towson University website: http://pages.towson.edu/itrow/wncomm.htm

[20] Smith, P.B., S. Dugan, and F. Trompenaars. 1997. Locus of control and affectivity by gender and occupational status: A 14-nation study. *Sex Poles* 36:51-57.

[21] Torppa, Cynthia B. *Gender Issues: Communication Differences in Interpersonal Relationships.* Ohio State University website: http://ohio-line.osu.edu/flm02/FS04.html

The interpersonal dimension of communicating as an elected official

The last discussion of the various ways elected officials, local citizens and local governments communicate with each other also emphasizes the breadth of opportunities available to all these parties. Some are expected like reports on official meetings, some are required by law, some are functionally important to keep others informed, and a few are communicating strategies of last resort resulting from a previous lack of communications. Much of the communicating that takes place between your local government and its citizens is the responsibility of staff and line employees. In these cases, the elected leadership involvement is more associated with other competencies such as overseeing, financing, policy making, and institution building.

Given these overlapping functions and competencies, we want to focus on those communicating concepts and strategies that are associated with further developing your personal competencies as a communicator. Most fall into the interpersonal or inter-group categories of communication techniques, responding to the concerns voiced by the expert group that provided so much of the guidance for this revised series.

We will start with what many believe to be the most important interpersonal communicating competency, active listening. This will be followed by concepts and techniques in giving and receiving feedback which are closely associated with listening skills; the art of asking questions; how to say "no" and not suffer the consequences of disappointing others; and something called the *ladder of inference.*

We will also revisit the advocacy and inquiry technique discussed in the Representation chapter from the perspective of communicating with constituents. Finally, we will explore the process of dialogue, what one author calls *the art of thinking together.*

Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice.

William Shakespeare, 16th Century English Poet

Active listening

Contrary to popular mythology, effective elected men and women do listen. In fact, active listening may be the elected leader's best friend. It's through listening that you hear and understand what your constituents want or don't want, what they are happy or angry about, and why. The same is true in working with your elected colleagues and the staff of your local government. Listening actively is a powerful leadership and governance tool.

We're not certain where the term "active listening" originated, but it is widely used to describe a process of communication designed to optimize the meaning and clarity of what another person is saying. The challenge is to work actively to hear as clearly as possible what is being said and to assure that what is being heard is what the other person is trying to say. In other words, active listening also involves reflecting back to the speaker assurances that what is being said is being heard. Before we talk about how to listen actively, let's look at why it's so easy not to hear what the other person is saying.

What barriers do you use?

Before hearing what the experts have to say about listening roadblocks, take a moment and list the three or four most important reasons why you don't always listen to what others are saying.

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4. ....

One of the best descriptions of listening barriers we have found is by a team of British consultants. In their book *Client-Centered Consulting,* they identify the following barriers to effective listening. We've taken some editorial license to adjust them to the elected official's work setting.[22]

❏ We're too busy thinking about other things. Sound familiar?
❏ We're distracted by some emotional word or phrase being used. Raise taxes!
❏ We disagree with what the other person is saying. So, we immediately switch our attention to figuring out what we will say in rebuttal. We suspect this is very common in those elected bodies where there are political divisions.
❏ We're listening for flaws in what the other person is saying. In some cultures our response to these flaws is known as "I gotcha."
❏ We want to express our own thoughts and views so we look for a way to intervene in the conversation as quickly as possible.
❏ We don't like the other man or woman for whatever reason. Prejudice steps into the conversation and effectively blocks what is being said.
❏ We assume that we won't understand so why listen. The city engineer is waxing poetically about some new complicated, scientific process to turn solid waste into building materials.
❏ We're just not interested. We're thinking, "That's the

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[22] Cockman, Peter, Bill Evans and Peter Reynolds, *Client-Centered Consulting,* (London: McGraw International, 1992) p.67.

responsibility of the public health committee."

❑ There are too many outside distractions. The phone is ringing. Other people are talking. I'm late for an appointment.

Do these interruptions in the flow of information and ideas from the other person to our brain sound familiar? Yes! We are all guilty of these silent communicating sins. Unfortunately, we also interfere with our intent to listen by making verbal responses that are destructive to effective conversations. We interrupt, get defensive, justify our actions or thoughts, give unsolicited advice, make judgements and assumptions, manipulate what has been said, and even change the subject.

Of all these barriers to communicating, prejudices might be the most difficult to overcome. The late Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti in his book *The Last Freedom* brings perspective to this personal challenge we are confronted with when trying to listen to others.

> "To be able to really listen, one should abandon or put aside all prejudices…
> When you are in a receptive state of mind, things can be easily understood…
> But unfortunately, most of us listen through a screen of resistance.
> We are screened with prejudices, whether religious or spiritual,
> psychological or scientific, or, with daily worries, desires and fears.
> And with these fears as a screen, we listen.
> Therefore, we listen really to our own noise, our own sound,
> Not to what is being said."

Removing the listening barriers

While there are many barriers that keep us from hearing what others are saying, there are also ways we can remove these barriers. Once again, we call on our British consultants to help us learn how.

The needle knows what it sews and the thimble what it pushes.

Columbian proverb Verbal listening skills

Ways to overcome them.	Listening barriers
Outside distractions	❏ Find someplace quiet ❏ Try to remove them ❏ Concentrate on what the other person is saying
Disagreeing with the other person for what ever reason	❏ Try to be open-minded ❏ Try not to judge the other person or what they are saying ❏ Try to understand why the other person has a different opinion than yours
Distracted by thinking about how to respond Mind wandering off to other things Responding to those emotional words that always turn you off	❏ Make mental summaries of what is being said ❏ Try to be attentive ❏ Make notes if it is important ❏ Be aware of those words or ideas that turn you off and work to neutralize your response to them [23]

These barriers are either constructed in our heads or by the environment. Except for some of the environmental factors, we must take responsibility for removing them if we want to be more effective listeners. Fortunately, there are some pro-active listening skills available to help in our efforts to be better listeners.

Verbal listening skills

Sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? Nevertheless, there are some ways we can work with what the other person is saying to offer encouragement, clarify points, summarize, and generally help the person who is talking to know she is being listened to and heard. Here are some examples on verbal listening skills.

❏ **Convey interest, what some might call empathy:** I like what you're saying."
❏ **Encourage:** "Yes, please tell me more."
❏ **Help clarify:** "Based on what you are saying, the situation is....."
❏ **Reflect back or paraphrase what you hear:** "If I understand you right, you are saying...."
❏ **Pull key ideas out for more elaboration:** "Let me see if I understand your key point which seems to be...."
❏ **Respond to feelings:** "You sound frustrated about...."

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23   Ibid, p.68

❑   **Summarize:** "Let's see if I can sum up what you just said."

These verbal listening skills don't shift the focus of the conversation to you and your need to talk. Rather, they help the person who is talking to better state their ideas and points of view. They also demonstrate your interest in and respect for the person who is talking.

A reflective opportunity

We've spent considerable time on the listening competency. Now it's time for you to reflect on your own experience as a listener. Think about a time when you were listening actively and then you either stopped listening to the other person or the quality of your listening changed. Jot down a few comments about the experience and why you think your listening competency took a nosedive. If you could relive that moment, what might you do differently.

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Now, recall a time when you found yourself unable to listen to another person. What were the barriers that put you in this non-listening state? Given the opportunity to replay that experience again, what could you have done to return to an active listening mode?

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What is the most important thing you have learned from this discussion that will enhance your active listening skills?

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Cultural traps

Before we move on to discuss other communicating competencies, we want to comment on the importance of running all of these ideas through your cultural filter of experience. The conventions of listening, asking questions, giving feedback, and other communicating tools may be different from culture to culture. While we are sensitive to these differences, it is difficult to develop materials from many different cultural perspectives. We are also

aware that we have cultural blinders on that keep us from seeing our own thoughts about these things as clearly as we should.

John Mole in *Mind Your Manners,* a book on managing cultural diversity, has this to say about listening and cultural differences. "The western way of listening is constantly to impose judgement, to filter what we see and hear through a critical faculty. While listening, the Japanese engage in a practice called *aizuchi* - a series of 'yes' or 'I understand' comments which serve to encourage the speaker. Westerners tend to make the mistake of interpreting *aizuchi* as agreement."[24]

We heartily agree with Mole on his comments about the Japanese and their verbal listening skills. It adds a solid footnote to what we have been saying about active listening. However, we are concerned that he has stereotyped all Westerners as "constantly imposing judgement" in their listening habits. Hmmm. Sounds to us like a judgement imposition. While cultural heritage plays an important role in how we communicate, we are also reminded that cultures are invented by those who live them. They change for better or worse as they assimilate norms and behaviours from other cultures. With this in mind, think about making aizuchi a part of your culture of communicating as an elected leader. As Ruth Benedict reminds us, *Culture is not a biologically transmitted complex.*

Giving and receiving feedback

Knowledge that is not used is abused.

Cree proverb

Verbal feedback has been identified in many cultures as an important communicating and learning competency. It is a process designed to bring information about a situation from someone who has access to it to the attention of someone who does not. The intent is to increase that person's understanding or awareness of the situation and thereby improve her capacity to perform more effectively. On the other hand, feedback has a directness about it that may be offensive in some cultures. Given this, we suggest you run this through your cultural filter and then ask yourself if it might be a positive addition to the ways you communicate as an elected official.

The following are examples of situations where elected officials might find this communicating skill helpful.

❑ One of your elected colleagues is using language in various settings that is offensive to women. It seems that he is the only one who isn't aware he is making sexist remarks. He is also the

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[24] Mole, John, *Mind Your Manners*. (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1998.) p.161.

most knowledgeable elected official on fiscal matters so no one on the elected body would like to see him voted out of office.

❑ The city engineer has alienated the residents of a small squatter settlement who have petitioned the city for sanitation services. She is technically correct in her recommendations to the elected council but refuses to recognize the political implications of her recommendations. Her career could be jeopardized if she continues to make her decisions based only on their technical merit. She is highly regarded for her professional qualifications but her colleagues often comment to each other that she is "insensitive".

❑ A number of elected officials have been appointed to the board of a regional council of governments to represent the city on intergovernmental affairs. It has come to the attention of the mayor that these representatives have acted in an arrogant and dictatorial manner with other members of the regional council. Since the city is the largest political sub-division represented on the regional council, these elected representatives believe they are merely trying to protect the city's interests. The smaller units of government are threatening to pull out of the regional council if the city representatives continue to harass them.

What would you do in each of these cases? Of course, we think they require something called feedback. Knowing how to give feedback to individuals such as those portrayed in the examples above is an important communicating skill. So are the skills in knowing how to receive the feedback. In both cases, they should be adapted to fit the cultural norms of your situation. Here is the conventional wisdom that seems to define these communicating practices.

Giving feedback: Giving feedback under the right circumstances can have many individual and organisation benefits. In the scenarios described above, appropriate feedback to those involved could support many objectives of the local governments involved. Feedback is designed to address behaviours that are not supportive and should be modified in some way. Feedback given early enough might solve a problem before it becomes a crisis event. When used regularly, feedback can help to build healthy and trusting relationships among people as they become more aware of where they stand with each other.

Feedback is most effective when it meets the following criteria.

❑ *Make it specific.* Being clear about the information to be conveyed makes it easier for the other person to understand it and act on it. Vague generalities are not helpful.

❑ *Be direct.* Deliver the feedback yourself. No one wants to get the news via a third party, particularly if it is personal and not favourable.

- ❑ *Be timely.* Get the feedback to someone while there is still time to do something about it.
- ❑ *Be descriptive*, not evaluative. Name the behaviour and its consequences for the person and others without attacking or ridiculing the person receiving the feedback.
- ❑ *Check for a response.* Be sure the message has been received and is understood.
- ❑ *Don't overlook the need for positive feedback.* If you operate on the assumption that no news is good news, your silence may be conveying the message that "you don't care." Positive feedback is just as important as commenting on areas of needed improvement.

Receiving feedback: If you are on the other end of the feedback, the receiving end, there are some things for you to keep in mind:

- ❑ *Don't become defensive.* While it may be hard to avoid defensiveness, particularly when the message is unfavourable, don't be so busy putting up defences, such as the "yes, but . . ." routine, that the value of the feedback gets lost.
- ❑ *Take it for what it's worth.* Not everyone who gives feedback is skilled at doing it. So, use what is valid and relevant to you and discard what is not.
- ❑ *Question the feedback.* Don't hesitate to ask clarifying questions when receiving feedback and give the recipient the same opportunity if you are the one giving feedback.

A reflective opportunity

Take a moment and reflect on how you feel about this communication tool. Think of situations where it might have been important, as an elected official, to have given feedback to one of your elected colleagues.

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On a scale of 1 to 5, rate you and your elected colleagues on your use of this communicating skill. In each case, circle the number that best describes your behaviour as an elected body.

Regarding frequency: 1 = not used at all; 3 = used sometimes; 5 = used frequently

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

Regarding the effectiveness of feedback communications by members of your elected body:

1 = not at all effective; 3 = somewhat effective; 5 = very effective

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

Based on your scores, what, if anything, might you and your elected colleagues do to improve the quality and effectiveness of your skills in giving and receiving feedback?

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He who asks a question does not err easily.

Mexican proverb

How to ask questions

You may be saying, "What's so important about asking questions? After all, it's something I've been doing all my life!" For all of us, the second part is true. Questions are a part of existing, even surviving. They are also a valuable tool for self-reflection, creative problem solving, focusing our attention, and inventing the future. As someone said, "Questions are like the mountain climber's hook on the end of a rope; we throw the hook into the unknown, and pull ourselves into the future." Donald Schon in *The Reflective Practitioner* suggests that we use questions to make a kind of space in our minds for things we do not know yet, haven't decided yet, nor invented or discovered yet.

There are skills involved in asking questions that make a difference. And making a difference is what elected leadership is all about. Asking strategic questions can open the door to discovery. They invite others to shift direction, to take into consideration new information, ideas, and possibilities. What we want to do now is explore some ways that you and your colleagues can master the skills of asking strategic questions, reflective ones that never reach the ears of others, and those that will enlighten and empower your decisions as elected men and women.

The why and how of asking questions

We have already discussed the use of questions as part of your active listening skills. While some of what we are about to say may be redundant, we believe the art of asking questions and the reasons why you should ask more questions as an elected official are important leadership qualities. Here's more about the *why* and *how* of asking questions.

❏ **To learn:** Elected leaders are constantly being confronted with issues they aren't familiar with and presented with staff reports and recommendations that are often incomplete or include ambiguities. To learn more in these situations ask open-ended questions, the kind that avoid one-word responses like "yes" or "no".

❏ **To get agreement:** There are many occasions in elected official discussions when it's time to see if there is agreement lurking in the shadows of the verbal exchanges taking place. "Does everyone agree that we....?"

❏ **To express interest:** One of your greatest assets as an elected official is your constituents. Nevertheless, it is common to hear comments like, "Since Julio got elected, he's really not interested in what we have to say." Use questions to show your interest and to get feedback.

❏ **To probe:** Many issues that come before elected bodies for consideration and resolution are complex. Probing questions are designed to help you and your colleagues dig deeper into the issues. "Could you tell us more about why the crime rate in that part of the city keeps climbing?"

❏ **To clarify:** Have you ever been confronted with casting a vote as an elected official when you were confused about some aspect of the proposed legislation? Asking for clarification can save a lot of bad legislation from happening.

❏ **To elaborate:** These are the questions that expand the exploration of options before the elected council or in committee sessions. "What would happen if we expanded our community policing program into the barrio just beyond our city boundary?"

❏ **To sort out what's relevant and what's not:** Sound like a good idea? "We appreciate the wealth of information you have provided, but what are the three most important reasons why we should support your NGO?"

❏ **To explore:** This is another reason to ask those hypothetical questions. "What is the worse thing that could happen if we adopted the neighbourhood budget sessions the finance director is recommending?"

❏ **To provoke:** This is not to make someone angry with you but to challenge conventional wisdom, to give free rein to doubt and scepticism. "Why do we keep insisting that citizens are

not prepared to pay higher taxes?"

❑ **To dream:** One of the greatest political speeches of all times was Martin Luther King's "I have a dream". While it wasn't quite a series of questions to American citizens about racial discrimination, it provoked a lot of "what if's," and they are the questions that move us beyond where we are.

Between active listening and strategic questions you have some of the most powerful tools available as an elected official.

The important thing is never to stop questioning.

Albert Einstein, 20th Century American Scientist

A reflective opportunity

Stop and think about your favourite questions i.e., "What would you do?" "Do you have any recommendations?" "What has been your experience?" Jot them down - and then, list one or two strategic-type questions you believe you need to begin asking more frequently at meetings with other elected officials.

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How to say "No"

But when the Town Crier cried, 'O yes!' the people cried 'O No!'

Richard Barham, 19th Century British theologian
Misadventures at Margate

Saying "No", particularly to your colleagues and constituents, may be one of the elected officials' most difficult communicating tasks. And not saying "No" when you need to can cause you enormous headaches. Since this dilemma seems to be part of being an elected official, it might be worth spending a bit of time on.

Peter Block has written one of the more useful books about governance. While his focus is largely on private organisations, his counsel is equally important to local governments. Block's central organising theme is stewardship which he defines as *the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the community by operating in service, rather than in control, of those around us - accountability without control or compliance.*[25]

When you as local elected officials decide how you will govern, one of your critical choices is between patriarchy and partnerships. Patriarchy is the notion that you as elected officials are responsible for the local governing process and the well-being of your citizens. Block refers to this as a form of intimate colonialism. Partnerships, as an alternative, are intended to balance qualities like power and responsibility between you and your constituents. We will talk more about partnerships in the competencies associated with *enabling* and *using power*, but for now we need to tie this conversation back into the communicating skill of saying "No".

According to Peter Block, partnerships need to fulfil the following requirements if they are to be successful.[26]

❑ There needs to be an *exchange of purpose.* While each party needs to struggle with defining their purpose in the relationship, they must also engage in dialogue with others to reach a shared understanding.

❑ Partnerships require *joint accountability.* Local governments, their elected men and women, and the partnerships they forge in the many communities that make up their larger domain must be accountable for their actions.

❑ They also require *absolute honesty.* As Block says, in a partnership, not telling the truth to each other is an act of betrayal.

❑ Finally, and this is the one you have been waiting for, *partners* have the right to say no.

If you as an elected official become known as someone who can't say no, then saying yes becomes meaningless. One of the fundamental differences between patriarchy and partnerships is the freedom to say no to those expectations you can't fulfil.

So, how do you say no and get re-elected?

Linda Tillman operates a web-site devoted to speaking up for yourself, and part of her speaking up advice has to do with saying "No." According to Tillman, there are three basic ways to say no:

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[25] Block, Peter. Stewardship. (San Francisco. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993) p. xx.

[26] Block, pp.29-30

1. *The unassertive "No.".* This is the no that is surrounded by weak excuses and rationalisations. It's the "no but...." routine.
2. *The aggressive "No."* This no is often delivered with an unhealthy dose of contempt, wrapped in personal attacks on the person(s) at the other end of the communication. It's as though you can hear the unspoken qualifiers like "you idiot."
3. *The assertive "No."* This response is simple and direct. "No, we won't be able to start a day-care centre in your community this year."

Tillman's strategies for saying "No" assertively are:
- ❑ Take time to think it over.
- ❑ Use whatever body language is appropriately in your culture to underline your "No". This could be a firm, but not aggressive voice, a shaking of the head, or other appropriate gestures.
- ❑ Remember, "No" is an honourable and legitimate response, even for local elected officials.
- ❑ Start your response with "No." It's easier to keep the commitment and not to fall into any number of unassertive "No" traps if you start with just plain "No."

If you want to learn more about Linda Tillman's thoughts on communicating, check out her website. www.speakupforyourself.com .

My unhappiness was the unhappiness of a person who could not say no.

Tsushima Shuji, Japanese Author
From No Longer Human

A reflective opportunity

If saying "No" has been a problem for you as an elected official or for your elected body, it may help to revisit one or two of those occasions to try and understand why this little word caused so much turmoil. Jot down a description of the experiences, why they were problematic, and what could have been done differently to have avoided the consequences.

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Perceptions, realities and something called "the ladder of inference"

Perception is a little like communication, one of those terms that is difficult define in a few chosen words. Someone once described it simply as "the process of making sense out of experience." Or, to put it more bluntly, our perceptions are our reality. What I interpret as what I see is what I define as reality. It may not be your view of reality, and neither one of our views might be accurate. But it's where we both start in making sense out of our world.

Remember the story about the blind men and the elephant? Depending on what part of the elephant they touched, they came away with a different interpretation. One felt the leg and likened it to a tree trunk; another felt the tail and described a rope; still another touched the elephant's side and said it felt like the wall of a building. Each believed he was experiencing a very different thing. Yet, what they were describing so differently was the same animal. So it is with many of the community "realities" we find ourselves working with. Only when we begin to explore our impressions of these many perceptions of reality can we get closer to the "truth" if, in fact, it exists.

Two factors are important about perceptions: (a) where they come from, i.e., what influences our perceptions and (b) what we tend to do when our perceptions are not congruent with those of others. Several things influence our perceptions of reality. First, we often see things in our environment differently. There is a perception experiment where a group of people are shown a square that has been divided into 16 squares. When groups of individuals are asked how many squares they see, the initial answers are usually from 16 to a number in the high twenties. Of course, every answer is the "right" answer depending on how the person answering sees the squares.

Secondly, we often experience events differently, and it affects our view, or perception, of reality. For example, two people experience the same cold, snowy winter but describe the season very differently to a mutual friend who has spent the year in another part of the world. Of the two, one who hates cold weather describes the winter as "miserable." The other who enjoys skiing describes the season as "delightful." Which one should the friend believe?

We all have different "internal states" which are a product of our collective learning. These internal states are influenced by our cultural heritage, our childhood experiences, our formal education, and our efforts to make a living. They are also influenced by things that motivate us - in fact, by everything we have done. The greater the difference between my internal state and yours, the more difficult it is for us to communicate "cleanly" with each other. By "cleanly" we mean without all the sheets of dark glass that filter our experiences in different ways.

How we react to these differences of perception in situations that are important to us depends on a lot of the factors we have just mentioned. The range of responses range from "being defensive," i.e., defending my own point of view while rejecting yours, to "walking a long distance in your sandals," i.e.,

showing great interest and empathy for your point of view and expressing, in one way or another, a willingness to adopt it if I find it acceptable. Your perceptions and interpretation of reality as you see it are important factors in how you represent your constituents as an elected official, and how you and your colleagues carry out your elected responsibilities. But getting from your individual perceptions as individual elected officials to a shared decision as an elected body can often be a torturous journey.

According to Chris Argyris and others, we get there by climbing our individual *ladders of inference.* By the way, the "ladder of influence" concept can be a bit difficult to grasp, particularly when we use it to bridge language and culture gaps. Nevertheless, it is an important idea to understand so bear with us. Think of *inferences* as "jumping to conclusions" prematurely. In the case of elected bodies, *jumping to a conclusion* can result in ineffective decisions, bad policies, or judgements toward certain groups in the community. Let's take a look at what often happens as we jump to conclusions prematurely. In fact, it rarely happens immediately, we often take a number of incremental steps on what Argyris and others have called the ladder of inference.

Step One: We make an observation or experience something.

Step Two: We quickly process the observation or experience and take from it what fits our needs at the time.

Step Three: We immediately give it meaning based on a bunch of personal, cultural, and other mind-forming experiences. This is our first jump to a conclusion.

Step Four: We make assumptions based on our conclusion and start to "infer things".

Step Five: With these conclusions, we begin to believe in them. In other words, they start to be part of our belief system.

Final Step: Lo and behold, we take actions based on these beliefs that are based on jumping to conclusions too quickly.

It's amazing how quickly we go up that ladder of inference by jumping to conclusions too quickly. By the way, it might help to clarify what is meant by inference. I.A. Richards, in Confluence, his treatise on the English language in 1954, said, *"Given some utterance, a person may <u>infer</u> from it all sorts of things which neither the utterance nor the utterer implied."* Or, to put it in non-academic terms that person jumped to a conclusion without getting all the facts, or at least enough facts and observations to make a rationale decision. To better understand this utterly confusing but important concept, here is an inference-ladder-climbing situation that should be familiar to most elected officials worldwide.

Josef on his way to a council meeting was confronted by a young man whom he assumed was a "street dweller." Before the meeting started, Josef mentioned it to one of the other elected officials who said, "We really need to do something about these people. They're hurting businesses by driving away

customers." That elected official brought it up before the entire elected body for discussion, and they concluded that it was a serious problem and rdered the police to take action. As it turns out, the young man from an ethnic minority group living in a nearby village was just starting to work as a member of a clean-up team sponsored by some of the down-town business owners. One of the business owners was furious and wrote a letter to the local paper accusing the elected officials of being anti-business and prejudiced. At the next meeting of the elected body, the council voted to cut funding for a downtown promotion programme because of a lack of cooperation from the merchants.

You can see how quickly the elected officials climbed that ladder of inference-from an observation to attaching meaning to the presence of the young man to assumptions about what they were doing in the downtown to conclusions and actions — which started a new round of inference ladder climbing involving the business community. In other words, it resulted in everyone jumping to conclusions.

What happened in this little scenario is conclusions were formed and never tested. The inferences about the young man by the first elected official were given meaning by the second elected official without checking further, and it turned into a series of unchecked inferences that resulted in a series of actions based on unchecked inferences. Substitute *conclusions* for *inferences* if it helps to understand this concept. As William Isaacs in his book on *Dialogue* and the *Art of Thinking Together* reminds us, we often:

"...form conclusions and then do not test them, treating our initial inferences as facts. We wall ourselves off, in other words, from the roots of our own thinking. And when we are invested in an opinion, we tend to seek evidence that we are right and avoid evidence that we are wrong."[27]

Isaacs reminds us that errors of this sort can have devastating consequences. Recent history regarding the inferences about weapons of mass destruction that were used to justify a war in the Middle East should remind all of us that we are talking about a concept that has real significance when policy makers get together, irregardless on their level of responsibility and degree of self-imposed importance. In many situations, we find ourselves eager to scramble up that ladder of inference without ever looking back. Before we look at some ways to improve your communicating competency associated with the metaphorical ladder, take a moment for reflection.

> *We don't see things as they are,*
> *We see them as we are.*
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> **Anais Nin, 20th Century**
> **French born, American Author**

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[27] Isaacs, William. Dialogue and the art of thinking together, (New York: A Currency Book by Doubleday Publishing, 1999.) p.95.

Take a moment and reflect on an occasion when you or your elected colleagues scrambled up that ladder of inference, thus jumping to conclusions that caused problems for many. What started it? What were the conclusion and consequences? Once you have related the beginning and end of this tale, try to fill in the steps on the ladder that took you to the top.

The situation and what started it:

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The conclusion and consequences:

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Inferences, assumptions and beliefs encountered along the way:

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How to climb the ladder with confidence

What we have been discussing is such an integral part of how we think and operate that you may be saying to yourself, "If I stop to think every time I infer something or draw a conclusion, I'll never get anything done. Besides, it will tie me in knots." Good point. Nevertheless, there are some communicating habits you can cultivate that will make your efforts with your elected colleagues and your constituents more rewarding.

Before we get to the prescriptive part of dealing with the ladder of inference, let's look at some of the conditions that feed this potential dilemma.

- ❑ Those you are communicating with may have different goals, values, and views from yours.
- ❑ Your experience may be very different from theirs, and you may fail to recognize these differences when you communicate with them.
- ❑ When communicating with your constituents, your status as an elected official may be intimidating or even alienate them if they resent the authority you represent.

❑ Even the physical set-up where the communication takes place may be a barrier to communicating with understanding. We're thinking about many of the council chambers around the world that create both a physical and psychological barrier between the council and public.

Based on these potential barriers to better communicating as you and your colleagues climb the ladder of inference, here are some thoughts on making the climb more effective.

1. Keep the barriers just mentioned and others to effective communicating in mind. Reflect on their importance and how you might factor them into your thinking and communicating.

2. When you begin to advocate your position or get a bit more assertive in communicating your point of view, back off and try to understand others and their perspectives.

3. Be open with others about your reflections and thinking. Make your inferences more visible. Ask for feedback on your assumptions.

4. Ask questions about the other person's assumptions, beliefs, and conclusions that are borne from those untested inferences.

5. Check out the data and information upon which the inferences are based. Don't be intimidated by those who would have you make critical decisions on behalf of your constituents without validation.

6. Help the other persons to walk through their process of thinking that lead to the assumptions. When done with care, most will welcome the opportunity to clarify their own thinking.

7. Engage in active listening. Remember it's your communicating competencies' best friend.

Many of the competencies defined in this series share overlapping concepts, strategies, and skills. And, of course, the roles of representation and leadership encompass all the competencies. In Chapter 2, we discussed the linkage between representation and the concept of advocacy and inquiry. Advocacy and inquiry are also part of the communicating competency and tie directly into the ladder of inference as it relates to your representation role and responsibilities. We encourage you to return to Chapter 2 and review the discussion entitled *Representation, Advocacy and Inquiry,* in relation to what has just been discussed regarding the ladder of inference. We think you will find many ideas and insights that will help you manage the ladder of inference challenges more effectively. The discussion about advocacy and inquiry also puts the spotlight on the various situations you are confronted with as an elected representative.

The spoken word belongs half to those who
speak and half to those who listen.

French proverb

The art and craft of dialogue

The final tool to put a capstone on your communicating competencies is dialogue, what William Isaacs calls the fire of conversation. Being a local elected official involves more than showing up at official meetings to cast your votes on public issues and concerns or listening to constituent complaints and finding ways to solve them. Being a local elected official also involves dealing with difficult, often long-standing, and seemingly impossible challenges. They may involve:

- ❑ An impending environmental disaster if some difficult and costly decisions aren't made by the local government and community;
- ❑ A major budget crisis that will drastically alter your local government's ability to continue providing long-established services;
- ❑ A community-wide social injustice that have been passed from one elected body to the next but now screams out for resolution; or
- ❑ An ethical dilemma that threatens to bring down your local government.
- ❑ ....We invite you to write down one or more major crises that your local government is currently facing that needs to be addressed.

When you and your local elected colleagues are confronted with these epic challenges, it is no longer business as usual. In these circumstances, you are called upon to dig deep into your institutional and personal resources to find solutions. While the communicating skills we have been talking about will be useful, we doubt whether they will help you make the quantum leap in judgement and courage that is often needed to resolve such monumental challenges.

For these situations, we believe you need to engage in a widely shared inquiry, a way of thinking and reflecting together that lifts you, your colleagues, and other key stakeholders above the fray so you can gain new insights and discover new solutions. This shared inquiry is called a dialogue. The process is centuries old but contemporary in its substance and style. Dialogue takes the energy of our differences and channels them toward something that has never been created before. It can lift a community out of its polarisation and help it create a greater common sense about where to go from that point. Because it holds so much hope for resolving old problems, healing long-festering sores, and tapping opportunities that have been buried in years of sour rhetoric, you must also recognize that it is a difficult process of communicating and time consuming. But then, building our local societies to achieve greatness will never be easy or quick.

The potential power of dialogue

The power of dialogue is best described by example. William Isaacs in his book *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* describes a situation where sustained dialogue between two individuals produced phenomenal results for their country. President de Klerk of South Africa and Nelson Mandela met privately over a number of years while Mandela was still in prison. They were not meeting to negotiate Mandela's release or to solve existing problems of that time. Rather they met to dialogue about how to create a shared future vision. The success that South Africa experienced in its peaceful transition to a full democratic society with equality for all is due in no small measure to these two men and their on-going dialogue about a new future for the country.

Dramatic and world class example, you say, but what about an example a bit more relevant? One of the authors had an experience that demonstrates how the process of dialogue can work at the local level of governance and involve more than two individuals. He took a job as a city manager in a secondary city where there was a total breakdown of communication, cooperation, and trust between the city and its five surrounding rural local self-governments. With the concurrence and encouragement of the city elected officials, the city manager spent countless hours over many months meeting with the local elected officials in the surrounding communities. The intent was to listen to them and to understand the depth of their concerns that had effectively closed the doors to effective communication between the various governing bodies. Once these individual, one-on-one conversations had re-established communications and a reasonable level of trust, the city officials joined in the dialogue. Over time, with no formal agenda or actions, these elected officials regained their trust in each other and explored the issues that had driven them apart.

At the heart of the conflict was a legal practice the city had used for many years to annex prime development land from the surrounding rural governments. While it was temporarily advantageous for the city to continue the practice, the longer term consequences carried a high price tag in terms of the overall development of the region. As a result of the informal, non-problem solving dialogues that took place among the local elected leaders, the city put a temporary moratorium on land annexation from their neighbouring local governments. This formal action opened the door for an ongoing dialogue about regional collaboration and ways to work together.

The moratorium on annexations still stands after more than thirty years and countless changes in political leadership in all six local governments. Moreover, the six municipalities established a formal regional council of governments (COG) that provides a wide range of services that are more economical to provide on a regional basis. Each of the six local governments are free to decide if each of these services, such as solid waste management, code enforcement or policing, would be to their benefit. The COG, which enjoys a national reputation for intergovernmental cooperation

and service all started through a series of dialogues that re-established trust within the region's governments. Those dialogues continue.

Dialogue can be a long and challenging process

The process of dialogue is not for every situation although it can be an important communicating competency to add to your repertoire. As you can see from the examples, it can produce positive results when the level of trust is low between important potential partners. Dialogue, unlike other communicating skills, is not easily described by a step-by-step process. Nevertheless, there are some guidelines to help you master this reflective approach to resolving complex challenges within your local government or among important partners in your efforts to achieve good governance.

Daniel Yankelovich has spent more than four decades monitoring opinions and trends in local governments. During that time he has either been involved in or witnessed countless numbers of public and private dialogues. Over time he came to value dialogue as a successful relationship building process that when conducted effectively, can lead to mutual understanding and respect. He has identified three distinct features that define successful dialogues.[28] If you can adhere to these guidelines, it is possible to conduct dialogues that will immortalize the reputation of your elected leadership service. These features are:

1. **Equality and the absence of coercive influences:** All parties to the dialogue are treated as equals and there is no coercion of any kind. Community dialogues are only possible when trust is established and those in authority remove their badges of official power and participate as equals. For example, would you be willing to sit and dialogue as equals with leaders of an ethnic minority in your community that has a reputation for using violence to achieve their goals?

2. **Listening with empathy:** Again we see the value of active listening. Empathy, according to Yankelovich, is the ability to think someone else's thoughts and feel someone else's feelings. In the hypothetical case of holding a dialogue with the leaders of community that has resorted to violence, would you be able to appreciate the circumstances that drove them to using violence, and to understand their level of frustration in being ignored by other public leaders in the past? Listening with empathy requires us to step outside our own experience and to let go of the inferences, assumptions, and perceptions that shape our view of reality.

3. **Bringing assumptions out in the open:** This is where your skills in dealing with the ladder of inference, and the process of advocacy and

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28 Daniel Yankelovich, The Magic of Dialogue (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999). pp. 41-4.

inquiry will come in handy. Be open about your assumptions and suspend judgement.

In addition to these three guiding principles and strategies that form the foundation for successful dialogues, Yankelovich has observed other qualities that aid the process.

- ❑ Err on the side of including those who disagree.
- ❑ Initiate dialogue through a gesture of empathy.
- ❑ Check to assure that the three criteria we have just mentioned are in place and working.
- ❑ Minimize mistrust by getting into the heart of why you decided to hold the dialogue.
- ❑ Separate the acts of dialogue and decision-making.
- ❑ Use specific experiences to discuss general issues.
- ❑ Get assumptions on the table and clarify them.
- ❑ Focus on conflicts in values, not people.
- ❑ Expose the old scripts that have destroyed trust to a reality check. In other words, look at the assumptions, values, and norms that have created the circumstances that make dialogue imperative.[29]

As Isaacs reminds us, dialogue is a conversation in which people think together in relationship. It has the power to change those situations that have grown to define the dark side of your community's governance.

> *"The carpenter says to King Arthur: 'I will make thee a fine table, where sixteen hundred may sit at once, and from which none need be excluded and no knight will be able to raise combat, for there the highly placed will be on the same level as the lowliest."*

> **Marcel Mauss, The Gift**

A reflective opportunity

Dialogue, our concluding contribution to the skills involved in the elected leadership communicating competencies, is potentially powerful and perhaps the most difficult. Nevertheless, we hope you will give it careful consideration as the capstone of your communicating qualifications. Take a moment and think about how you and your elected colleagues might employ the dialogue process. Jot down your thoughts in the following space. Make a point to

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[29] Ibid. pp. 127-8.

share these thoughts with others who might share your commitment to the dialogue process.

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Surveys: another way to communicate with the community

Most local governments do not use citizen surveys as a way of "listening" to those in the community. Yet, surveys can be valuable in providing more in-depth information about: (a) the quality of services the local government is providing; (b) reasons why local citizens may not like certain services or why they may not be using certain programmes or services; (c) factual information that may be needed to design new projects or alter on-going ones; (d) ways to help local citizens become more aware of programmes and services; and (e) assessing demand for new services.

Many local governments don't use citizen surveys because they seem complicated and expensive. Both concerns are true and not true. Surveys can be very complex, particularly if they adhere to strict academic standards of verifiability. But we would remind you that your city, in carrying out a survey, is not trying to satisfy a doctoral dissertation committee or to demonstrate a high level of research competence. This is not to suggest you should be sloppy in conducting a citizen survey. On the other hand, you can reinsure yourself that any additional data or information, carefully gathered, will be better than no feedback at all from the community and better than random conversations with your close friends.

What about cost? Yes, citizen surveys can be expensive if you use professional research organizations or spend too much time on planning and designing communication tools. There are other ways to "tool up" to do citizen surveys. If there is a university or other institutions of higher learning in your area, they can be an excellent source of expertise and labour. Often, professors who are teaching research methods welcome opportunities for their students to work with a real client. If no such resource is available, you might consider training one or two of your current staff members to conduct periodic citizen surveys.

While there are various types of surveys you can conduct (telephone, mailed questionnaires and interviews), the interview makes the most sense, particularly to reach people in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. (It is these parts of the community that often have the greatest difficulty being heard by those in "city hall.")

We won't go into the mechanics of citizen surveying in this essay. Our intention has been to suggest surveying as another tool you can use to "communicate' with your constituents. If you decide to use citizen surveys, here are a few additional things to keep in mind.

1. Be sure you are prepared to hear what those who respond have to say. Sometimes the information isn't too favourable, or you may hear things you haven't heard before.

2. Asking questions often implies that something will happen as a result. Contact with citizens can raise expectations. This needs to be factored into the plan and conduct of any survey.

3. Those who participate in citizen surveys are more likely to use the results. This includes those on both sides of the survey process. If you are surveying mothers about family-planning services and how to increase the effectiveness of community-education programmes, those who are responsible for these programmes should be involved in the design and conducting of the survey. It should heighten their understanding and commitment to the results of the inquiry. The same is generally true of those who are involved in providing new information.

4. The most important questions to be answered about citizen surveys before conducting them are:
   ❑ What do you want to accomplish in surveying the community?
   ❑ Are the governing body and staff prepared to use the results of the citizen survey to improve the quality of programmes and services to the community?

A reflective opportunity

Quickly, jot down five citizen surveys of services and programmes that you believe would help the governing body make more effective and efficient decisions in preparing next year's operating budget. Following each give your reasons why you think each would be helpful in your decision making processes.

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The ear penetrates darkness.

Masaai proverb

So does a well crafted survey.

Fred Fisher,
The Floradale Philosopher

Key points

- ❑ Communicating may be the most important elected leadership competency that is covered by this series of training chapters.
- ❑ Trust develops hand-in-hand with shared and truthful communications, and shared information is vital to performance.
- ❑ While communicating covers a wide range of possible options, the emphasis is on interpersonal skills.
- ❑ The communicating competency infuses the principles of good governance and overlaps with other leadership competencies.
- ❑ There are many communication techniques available for local people and local governments.
- ❑ From among the many interpersonal communicating skills, active listening may be the most important.
- ❑ The ability to listen effectively must be weighed against many listening barriers.
- ❑ While it sounds a bit strange, active listening involves a fair amount of two-way communication.
- ❑ Culture has a lot to do with the way we communicate, but it shouldn't restrain us from learning new ways to communicate.
- ❑ After all, culture is invented by those who live it, and our cultural habits change when better ways of doing things become evident and practical.

❏ Giving and receiving feedback increases the volume of two-way information and helps to keep the airways between communicators free of static.

❏ The art of asking questions comes in many varieties. To ask the right kinds of questions in inoffensive and helpful ways is an advantage to all those who are listening and speaking.

❏ It's okay to say no as an elected official, and there are some ways to say no that are better than others.

❏ Perceptions are the process of making sense out of our experiences. They also become the window through which we judge reality. The challenge is to synchronize the two.

❏ The ladder of inference can lead us to many misguided beliefs and actions if we don't watch our steps along the way.

❏ Inferences are safer when checked out with those who hear them.

❏ Dialogue may be the most difficult and potentially the most rewarding communicating skill elected leaders engage in. It is a conversation in which people think together in relationship.

Chapter 4:
The Facilitating
Competency

Introduction

If you have one good idea,
people will lend you twenty.

Marie van Ebner-Eschenbach

While the English word facilitate has been around for nearly four hundred years and basically means "to make easier", the term was rarely used to describe human interactions until the later part of the 20th century. In fact, H.W. Fowler in his 1926 authoritative book Modern English Usage said only things could be facilitated, not people. We mention this trivial note not to cast doubt on the use of the term facilitating as an elected leadership competency but to put it into perspective. The terms facilitating, facilitation, and facilitators only came into common use sometime in the early 1970s to describe a particular form of human interaction associated with group process.

In spite of its youthfulness as a conceptual framework for improving group effectiveness, facilitation has become an important management and governance strategy. Since elected officials often operate as a group, albeit a special group with unique legal and governing parameters, we could hardly ignore facilitating as one of your important leadership competencies. Before exploring ways you can use this competency we want to look briefly at the values and norms that have defined facilitating over the past three decades or so.

Roger Schwartz in *The Skilled Facilitator* says all kinds of groups can improve the way they work together by using facilitating skills. In its truest form, *facilitating is a process where a person, who is acceptable to all the members of the group, substantively neutral and has no decision-making authority, intervenes to help the group improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions.*[30] He goes on to say that facilitating can be divided into two types:

1. Basic facilitation: the facilitator helps a group work more effectively on a specific issue or problem, and the group remains dependent on the facilitator for future assistance.

2. Developmental facilitation: the facilitator helps the group work more effectively on a specific issue or problem <u>and</u> coaches them on how to provide their own facilitating skills to work on future issues and problems. This approach involves learning-by-doing. Group members learn facilitator skills so they can apply them to future group endeavours without the need for external assistance.

In this chapter we assume elected leaders will perform as developmental facilitators whenever it is appropriate. You will not only help

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[30] Schwartz, Roger. The Skilled Facilitator. (San Francisco. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994) p.4.

groups be more effective when you are working with them but provide them with the values and skills to work more effectively on their own. The competency of facilitating group effectiveness is at its best when it is passed on to others through learning-by-doing.

A brief preview

As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, this new series of elected leadership chapters is based on a written survey of users of the original elected leadership series and the input of the expert group meeting convened by UN-HABITAT. Based on these user inputs, this chapter includes the following discussions.

- ❑ An overview of some of the more important group process concepts and strategies as they relate to understanding and using facilitating skills as an elected official.
- ❑ The similarities and differences between facilitation and mediation processes.
- ❑ How to mediate conflicts and differences from an elected leadership perspective.
- ❑ How to build political consensus while avoiding "group think."
- ❑ How to conduct more effective meetings as an elected official.
- ❑ Team building as a possible facilitating strategy and skill for use by elected officials.
- ❑ How facilitating concepts and skills relate to the other competencies and the foundation and capstone roles and responsibilities of representation and leadership.

A reflective opportunity

Based on your understanding of the facilitative competency, take a few moments and record two or three experiences you have had in facilitating group situations where the outcomes could have been more positive and productive.

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What might you have done differently that would have improved the outcomes of these meetings?

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What do you perceive at this point to be the most important things you can learn about facilitating that will help you become more effective as an elected official?

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A boat doesn't go forward if everyone is rowing her own way.

Swahili proverb

Facilitating: A skill based on group process

The facilitating competency as it relates to elected leadership performance and knowledge and skills in group process are overlapping realities. Given this, it is important to understand some of the basics about group process. Before we address these basics, let's look at some of the potential intervention opportunities where you and your elected colleagues might use your facilitating knowledge and skills. This competency could be valuable in:

❏ meeting with your colleagues, other public officials, and representatives of the community to develop a strategic plan for the municipality;

❏ working with the elected council's public safety committee, public safety officials, and key citizens to develop more effective ways to involve citizens in security related programs at the neighbourhood level;

❏ mediating a dispute between two competing job training centres that operate in your part of the city; and

❏ assisting representatives of adjoining municipalities to develop a cost sharing arrangement as a pre-condition to contracting with the city for solid waste services.

Core values that guide effective facilitation

In each of these potential facilitating opportunities, it is important to recognize that a set of core values should guide your involvement. The most commonly recognized and defining set of facilitating values are those spelled out by Chris Argyris in his seminal book on intervention theory. They include:

1. **Valid and useful information:** meaning that all involved share the information relevant to the issue, that they understand it, and that it is useful to their deliberations.
2. **Free and informed choice:** those involved are free to make decisions based on the available information and their concerns, interests and desires. They are not coerced or manipulated into making choices against their will.
3. **Internal commitment to the choices made:** those involved not only accept the course of actions to be taken, but they also have a high degree of ownership and commitment to the decision(s) that will drive these actions.

These core values tend to reinforce each other. When a task-oriented group generates valid and useful information and makes informed choices based on that information, they will, more often than not, become internally committed to these choices. This means they are prepared to take responsibility to see that the decisions they made are implemented. This often provides the incentives to seek more information that can lead to continuing improvements.

Facilitating attributes and skills

The role of the skilled and principled facilitator is both challenging and rewarding. Those individuals who perform best as facilitators possess the following personal qualities, knowledge, and skills:

- ❑ *Personal qualities:* The effective facilitator is
  - Honest - acts on conviction.
  - Consistent - can be relied upon to do what she says.
  - Accepting - holds all individuals in unconditional regard.
  - Caring - concerned about the well-being of others.
  - Objective - has no vested interest in one action over another. This quality is difficult to achieve as an elected official who is expected to take stands on issues. If you have a vested interest, declare it along with your commitment to be fair.
  - Flexible - ready to change when the situation calls for it.
  - Responsive - to all points of view.

❑ *Knowledge:* The effective facilitator understands and appreciates the importance of
- Cultural, ethnic, and gender qualities and contributions.
- Group and interpersonal dynamics.
- Adult learning principles and methods.
- Group process
- The expertise represented within the group.

❑ *Interpersonal skills:* The effective facilitator is skilful in
- Active listening.
- Giving and receiving feedback.
- Asking questions that will stimulate discussion.
- Observing group and individual behaviour that can either contribute to or adversely affect the effectiveness of the group.
- Presenting information and concepts that will help the group progress toward its goals.
- Stimulating interaction.
- Building and maintaining trust.
- Bringing successful closure to the group's interactions.

Looks pretty intimidating, doesn't it? And yet, many of these personal qualities are associated with other competencies covered in this series. For example, the communication skills from the previous chapter and the concepts and strategies you will be exploring in the *enabling* competency have overlapping tendencies. And, the personal qualities required of the effective facilitator extend to all the representation and leadership roles and responsibilities as an elected official.

A reflective opportunity

Go back to the laundry list of facilitator attributes we have listed and check those where you believe you are the strongest and most effective in using in group situations. List the most important ones below.

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Now, return to the lists and check those you believe you can improve upon. List the two or three most important personal improvement items and put together a "to-do" list of actions you can take to help you be a more effective facilitator.

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When one is helping another, both are strong.

German proverb

What makes groups perform effectively?

Have you ever wondered why some groups are effective while others never seem to accomplish their goals? Some elected bodies even though they may represent different political parties and special interests seem to be able to operate effectively while others with no apparent divisive differences are unproductive. And most community and neighbourhood groups tend to run the gamut from success to failure in their efforts to achieve their goals.

As an elected official you can have an influence on not only the performance of your elected body as a group decision-making endeavour but also countless other situations where the results depend on collaboration among those involved. In other words, your facilitating competencies will serve you and your various constituents well. Of course, it will help to better understand what makes groups, whether they are just two persons or many, operate effectively.

Groups work at two different levels of interaction: task and relationships. These two interactive components operate simultaneously and often get trampled by each other. The facilitator can play an important role in helping groups maintain a healthy balance between their task and relationship needs. The following are some of the key task and relationship characteristics that are important to effective group performance.

Relationship-related characteristics: Groups are effective when their members

- ❑ Get acquainted with each other if they haven't worked together before.
- ❑ Agree on the group's purpose for working together;
- ❑ Collaborate on group tasks and responsibilities;
- ❑ Openly share information, ideas, and feedback;
- ❑ Support one another;

- ❑ Confront issues with care and courage;
- ❑ Respond constructively to feedback from one another; and
- ❑ Encourage everyone to contribute.

Task-related characteristics: The group's task effectiveness is enhanced when they:

- ❑ Are clear about what they want to achieve, in other words, why they have convened their collective resources;
- ❑ Clarify their individual roles and responsibilities as members of the group;
- ❑ Determine the need for external support and resources;
- ❑ Agree on how they will work together;
- ❑ Establish some ground rules including such concerns as making decisions, staying on track; disagreeing openly, and sharing all relevant information;
- ❑ Prepare an agenda;
- ❑ Record accurately what happened during the meeting; and
- ❑ Manage their time in relation to the tasks to be performed.

As we said earlier, groups operate at both task and relationship levels of engagement. The facilitator, if so designated, has the responsibility for helping the group manage each of these dynamics effectively. However, all of us are members of many groups where the role of facilitator is not appropriate or necessary. For example, formal elected body meetings have a chairperson, mayor, commissioner, or whatever these individuals are called in your local government. We doubt that these individuals view their official role as a facilitator. Nevertheless, their effectiveness as your official leader will be enhanced by applying their *facilitating competencies.*

Just because a meeting is formal doesn't deny any elected man or woman from applying many of the skills we have been discussing, nor do you need to put on the official cap as a "facilitator" to help groups work more effectively together. In other words, your facilitative competencies can serve you well in any situation where two or more people get together to be purposeful.

You cannot create experience. You must undergo it.

Albert Camus, 20th Century French Novelist-Essayist

How groups develop and mature

While there is much more we could say about group process as it relates to your elected leadership roles and responsibilities, we want to end this discussion with some insights into how groups typically develop. If you already know about this conceptual framework, skip on to the next section. If not, you might find it interesting. In either case, we encourage you to consider it in the development of your elected body after an election. When newly elected colleagues join your governing team, this process starts from Stage one.

Bruce Tuckman created the following group development model about forty years ago so we want to give him due credit. He described the development of groups in four distinct and sequential stages: *forming, storming, norming, and performing.* Here's how they work.

Stage One: *Forming*

As group members meet for the first time, they tend to test the boundaries of acceptable behaviour including the leader's role and guidance. Little progress is made at this stage. While this tends to be normal in most situations, the slow start can be worrisome, particularly to someone who is either leading or facilitating the group.

Stage Two: *Storming*

Group members often become a bit agitated since their expectations of progress are not being met. They begin to blame the leader and each other and resist collaborating. They typically resist assignments, become defensive and competitive, and question the decision of forming the group. While this stage is normal, even for healthy teams, it must be worked through patiently. It is the group's adolescent stage of growth and development. For those who have had teenagers in the family, this stage will sound very familiar.

Stage Three: *Norming*

At this stage, group members begin to settle down, are ready to reconcile their differences and responsibilities, and accept the fact that being a group requires structure and rules. Conflict subsides and cohesion begins to build. Members support their leader and each other.

Stage Four: *Performing*

It becomes apparent to all members when they reach this stage. There is collaboration and interdependence, achievement is significant, and members recognise the strengths and weaknesses of each member and compensate accordingly. There is satisfaction in the progress of the group.

While there may be some variations in the growth of groups within different cultural settings, and in the context of differences in gender relations, there also seems to be general agreement among group specialists that these stages are common world-wide. But, you are saying, how does it affect me as an elected official? It does in several ways.

- ❑ As mentioned earlier, these stages might alter the effectiveness of your elected body when there has been a membership turnover due to elections. The elected body, in reality, must re- form to become an effective working group.
- ❑ If your elected body has established study commissions or similar groups with specific tasks and responsibilities, it is helpful to realize that they will go through these stages on their way to becoming effective. Patience is required.
- ❑ Community-based ventures that use group decision-making formats are often frail at best in their early days of development. Given this, elected leaders might help them through their "growing stages" by offering some facilitating assistance.
- ❑ As you become a member of various task forces in your responsibilities as an elected leader, remember that group process is a force to reckon with and be glad you read this chapter.

Music, to create harmony, must investigate discord.

Plutarch, First Century Greek Moralist

Managing conflict

Conflict is one of those things that most us avoid if we can. The problem is, the conflict, and whatever is causing it, usually doesn't go away. It just sits there and simmers - and simmers. Avoiding conflict can and does create a lot of problems in many organizations. We also know that different cultures deal with conflict differently, and what we have to say is from a Western management bias. Given this, we urge you to look at this aspect of using your facilitating competency based on your own experience and cultural norms.

We tend to avoid conflict because it is unpleasant to bring it out in the open. Keeping it buried isn't pleasant either, but on the whole, it seems to be less unpleasant than confronting the issue causing conflict. But, is it? Over the long run, submerged conflict can take a heavy toll in an organization or community. Fortunately, conflict has some positive aspects to it although it's hard to see them when we are locked in conflict with another person or organization. Quickly, here is a List of the pros and cons of conflict.

On the plus [+] side of the ledger, conflict can force us to look for new solutions, help us clarify our positions and points of contention, and provide a surge of energy and activity. Conflict can bring problems to the surface that

may have festered under the surface for years, produce better ideas, and provide for a breakthrough in relations and productivity.

On the minus [-] side of the equation, conflict can create an atmosphere of anxiety, distrust, and suspicion. It can make some people feel demeaned and demotivated. Conflict can generate dysfunctional behaviour by those in conflict (where they spend more time "getting even" than getting ahead) and increase the distance between people who could benefit from working together.

Know the source

Conflict can develop when there are differences in:
- ❑ Facts and perceptions (our communicated view of reality)
- ❑ Preferred goals and outcomes (how things ought be, not how they currently are)
- ❑ Ways, or methods, for achieving those goals
- ❑ Values (our fundamental beliefs)

Differences over facts and perceptions are usually easier to resolve than differences in goals, outcomes, and the methods used to achieve these results. Values are the most difficult differences to resolve or even to manage with any degree of long-term success.

Conflict strategies

Different people have different ways of dealing with conflict. Many years ago, Kenneth Thomas, who is considered one of the leading experts on conflict management, identified five basic strategies individuals and groups employ when faced with conflict. These approaches are based on two primary dimensions of behaviour, "assertiveness," (the extent to which we attempt to satisfy our own concerns) and "co-operation," (the extent to which we attempt to satisfy the other person's concerns). Using a two dimensional model (see the next page) with high and low values on these two behaviours, he has defined five specific methods of dealing with conflict.[31]

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[31] Thomas, Kenneth, "Conflict and Conflict Management", *The Chapter of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, Vol. II* (Chicago, IL, Rand McNally, 1975).

Avoidance: (unassertive and uncooperative) Individuals who adopt an avoidance approach to conflict don't pursue their own interests and concerns or those of their adversaries. They simply avoid conflict by such tactics as not showing up for the meeting or by postponing the issue until some undetermined future date.

Accommodation: (unassertive and cooperative) Those who adopt this style neglect their own interests to satisfy the concerns of the other party. Tactics include such contrasting approaches as: yielding to the other side's point of view and selfless generosity.

Competition: (assertive and uncooperative) This style is the opposite of accommodation. It's a power-motivated strategy designed to win at any cost when confronted with a conflicting situation.

Collaboration: (assertive and cooperative) And, the opposite of avoidance. Collaboration, at its best, seeks to find win-win solutions to conflict. This involves solutions that satisfy the needs and concerns of both parties. Such a strategy involves an understanding of why the conflict exists and finding solutions that eliminate, or at least minimize, competition for resources.

Compromise: (somewhat assertive and cooperative) Parties tend to compromise when they are looking for fast, mutually acceptable solutions that partially satisfy both parties. Strategies include finding a middle ground everyone can live with and splitting the differences that exist between the conflicted bodies.

Two-Dimensional Conflict Model

High/ Low   **Cooperation**   **High/ High**

Competition	**Collaboration**

Assertiveness _____   **Compromise** _____

Avoidance	**Accomodation**

Low/ Low   **Low/ High**
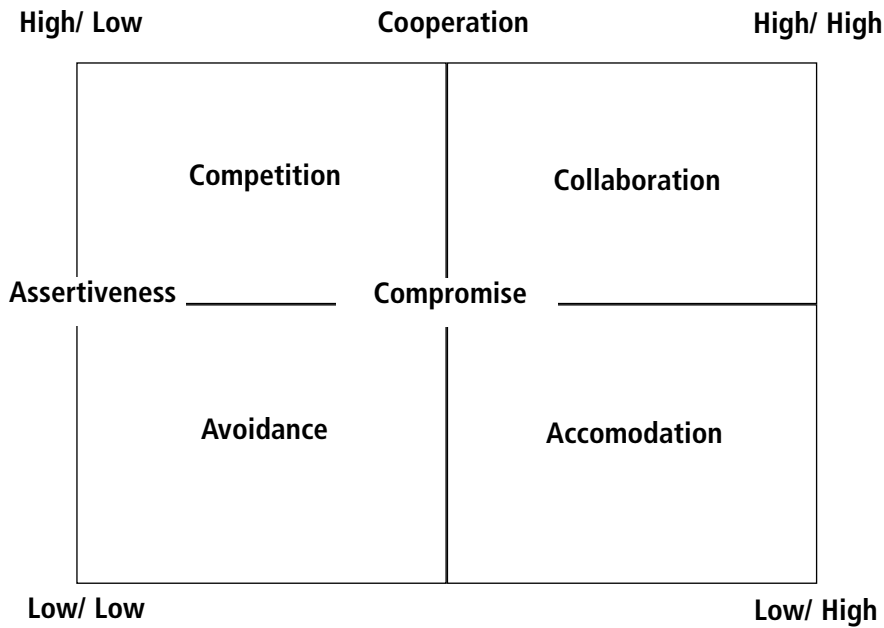
According to Thomas, there are no universal "right answers" when it comes to dealing with conflict. All five modes of behaviour are useful. It depends on the situation. It is believed that each of us tends to have a dominant style for dealing with conflict. For example, some of us might avoid conflict at all cost while others may have a tendency to be competitive in conflict situations. Then again, we might resort to compromise or one of the other styles suggested by the Thomas model.

Explore the difference

If you are going to help manage conflict, the best place to begin is with a better understanding of the issues behind the conflict. This means digging beneath the surface indicators of what might be causing the conflict. Facts are the easiest to confirm and reconcile. Perceptions are more difficult. They have a tendency to become distorted, partly because we have the tendency to attribute motives to other people's actions and "see" things that will confirm our own position. For example, you may think my perception of a situation is pure fantasy, but to me it's very real. My perceptions of what is "real" have become part of my frame of reference and way of dealing with conflict. Sometimes it is easy to clarify inaccurate perceptions by "getting out the

facts." Other times it is more difficult. Here are some things you can do to help facilitate the resolution of a conflict between two individuals or groups.

1. Help the individuals or groups see the conflict from the others' point of view. Here is a situation when "active listening" skills can be used.

2. Look for situations where the conflicting parties have made assumptions about the intentions of others based on their own fears. Often we assume the worst in conflict situations, and these fears drive us to entrenched positions.

3. Move the warring parties away from attacking each other and placing blame. When this happens, we usually become defensive, counter attack, and create more distortions.

4. Help them create additional options. Often the only alternatives they have available are the two over which they are at odds.

5. Let them vent their emotions. Sometimes the emotions are more important than the facts. By getting them out, the parties often are able to unload feelings that inhibit constructive discussion.

6. Help them find win-win solutions. Not everyone wins in the resolution of conflict, but it is surprising how many times conflicts can be resolved with both sides coming out as winners. This is where your ability to listen and help those in conflict generate new options can be invaluable. Your best resources, in helping others resolve their differences are: (a) the raw materials (knowledge and emotions) they bring to the situation, and (b) your patience and empathy in helping the adversaries refine their raw materials into an agreement they can both live with.

Gender issues in conflict resolution

The field of Conflict Resolution has traditionally not taken much notice of gender issues in either theory or practice. 'Gender' is a term used to describe the different socially-constructed roles usually, but not always, assigned to people based on their sex - their biological characteristics. Gender issues include questions related to both men and women, but gender is often seen to imply a focus on women because of a concern in the field with inequality and empowerment of socially disadvantaged people - often women.

Empirical research has focused on firstly, whether men and women express and manage conflict differently and, secondly, differences in the styles of mediation used by men and women and their relation to the effectiveness of conflict management. Broadly, studies have concluded that there are gender differences in conflict-managing behaviour and that these differences are influenced by a number of variables (e.g., context, power, status, gender of other mediators/parties). However, while the studies confirm the differences between men and women as communicators,

negotiators, and third parties, they also demonstrate the pervasive stereotyping that accompanies such dichotomies.

Traditionally, peace has been sought through two different approaches, often working against each other: firstly, through diplomacy backed by military power and, secondly, through citizen peacemaking efforts. The first, a top-down approach (in contrast to the bottom-up or peace building from below), is dominated by men, while women have often been central to the second. Women are largely excluded from high-level negotiations and diplomacy aimed at ending conflicts and their concerns are often ignored, despite women's participation in intervention efforts and local peace movements. This is not to suggest that all women are inherently peaceful and all men are inherently warlike-this would not only fly in the face of experience but would perpetuate stereotypes which mask the complex relationships between gender roles and conflict behaviour. However, it is worth considering that conflict resolution processes might benefit by the incorporation of traditionally ignored voices for peace within conflict-torn societies, including those of women.

For example, in Somalia, women participated in the UN peace conference of '92-'93; however, they were not substantially involved in the larger peace initiatives of the decade. Locally based clan reconciliation conferences have recognised the resources of Somali women's groups and employed women as 'bridge-builders'. Conflict resolution processes could benefit by consulting more with local women about the root causes of the conflict, how their communities are affected by the conflict, how the obstacles to peace negotiations can be removed, and how traditional practices can offer alternative ways of ending the conflict. [32]

Municipal governments in many countries are functioning in a daily environment of war and conflict. These on-going conflicts affect municipal functions and responsibilities such as the provision of health, education, transportation, childcare, road maintenance, and water and sewerages services. As many conflicts are on-going and last over many years, and even decades, municipalities have to learn to function in situations of war.

Local governments' recognition of women's role in conflict resolution can assist in lowering the level of conflict, and to identify and sustain avenues for the continual provision of municipal services. For example, as women are responsible for sustaining households, have children who are victims or agents of conflict, and as many women are active in community affairs, they have an interest in peace and the regular functioning of municipal services. Women often know the key actors in the conflicts; the historical and current contexts that escalate the violence; and the entry points for negotiation and conflict reduction. Engaging women in conflict reduction will enable some peace and conflict minimization, if not resolution; and the continued provision of essential services to the population.

To reiterate, conflict is a potentially valuable resource in most organizations. Your facilitating competencies can help to resolve these

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[32] Adapted from the material of the Centre for Conflict Resolution, University of Bradford, UK

conflicts and differences. If you haven't already been introduced to the UN-HABITAT, FPDL and LGI series entitled Building Bridges between Citizens and Local Governments through Managing Conflict and Differences we urge you to check out the UN-HABITAT website for access to them. www.unhabitat.org

The stitch is lost unless the thread is knotted.

Italian proverb

Facilitating and mediating

Given the inevitability of conflict entering into your role as an elected official, we want to introduce you to mediation as one of your facilitating skills. Unfortunately, facilitating is often confused mediating. In fact, it came up during the expert group meetings where decisions were being made on how to improve the first edition of the elected leadership series. Before we go any further in an effort to clarify the differences, it might help to repeat the definition of facilitating we provided earlier. In its truest form, *facilitating is a process where a person, who is acceptable to all the members of the group, substantively neutral and has no decision-making authority, intervenes to help the group improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions.*

In many ways, the processes of facilitating and mediating are similar. Both are efforts to improve the quality of thinking and acting among the parties involved and to help them reach decisions acceptable to all members. In most situations these two processes also involve neutral third party interventions. In other words, the facilitator or mediator is on the outside looking in, not involved directly in decision making.

The major difference between these two processes is the issue of conflict. Mediation assumes the parties involved are in conflict. They haven't been able to resolve their differences and have sought the services of a mediator. In the case of facilitation, there may be conflict within the group but it isn't the reason why the group agreed to have someone help facilitate their interactions. The focus in facilitated sessions is primarily on making better decisions and solving problems.

We provided a definition of facilitation earlier in this discussion. You might want to compare it with the following definition of mediation. According to Carl Moore, *mediation is the intervention into a dispute or negotiation by an acceptable, impartial, and neutral third party who has no authoritative*

decision-making power to assist disputing parties in voluntarily reaching their own mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute.[33]

It is too simplistic to describe the differences between facilitation and mediation as the presence or absence of conflict. There are other ways in which the processes differ.

1. **They operate from different objectives.** Mediation is designed to help the parties negotiate a settlement to a particular conflict. Mediators are sought out by those who have a conflict they have been unable to resolve. The objective of facilitation is to help a group improve its methods of making decisions and solving problems and otherwise become more effective in their work together. While the group may experience conflict in their deliberations, it is not their primary focus.

2. **The processes have different entry points.** The services of the mediator are sought after the parties have reached an impasse. While facilitators are sometimes called in when a group has experienced conflict, more often than not they are brought into the process as a helping professional to help the group make better decisions and to work more effectively together.

3. **The processes are managed differently.** Mediation is a tightly controlled process. The mediator determines who will talk when based on an agreed upon procedure. There are ground rules for each party to follow. Facilitation, on the other hand, is a process where the facilitator and the group jointly agree on how they will function together. Typically, the facilitator manages the group's process so the group members can focus on the content, or task.

4. **The interactions between the various parties are different.** Facilitators work with the entire group with few exceptions whereas mediators work back and forth between individual client consultations and joint discussions among the conflicted parties.

We haven't mentioned that the process of *negotiation* also gets confused with mediation. There is one fundamental difference between the processes of facilitating and mediating, and negotiating. Negotiating is a process where those involved are clearly representing their clients. Or if they are negotiating as a member of an organisation, it is expected they will represent their organisation's point of view. Negotiators are not neutral, impartial, third-party participants with no decision-making powers as are mediators and facilitators. But now is not the time to talk more about negotiating as a competency. Chapter 9 is devoted entirely to the *negotiating competency.*

> *If we keep following the idea of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, we will end up with an eyeless and toothless world.*

> **Gandhi, 20th Century Indian National Leader**

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[33] Moore, Carl. *The Mediation Process: Practical strategies for resolving conflict.* (San Francisco; Jossey-Bass Publishing, 1986) p.14.

The art and craft of mediation

As we have just mentioned, mediation is a lot like facilitation. It is also different. Given these differences, and the likelihood that you as an elected official may be asked to mediate differences between various parties, it is an important tool to have in your facilitating tool kit. Before we go any further with this discussion, we want to encourage you to take advantage of the joint publication by UN-HABITAT and other interested parties called *Building Bridges between Citizens and Local Governments through Managing Conflicts and Differences.* It provides a much more thorough discussion of various ways to manage conflict and differences. You can find it on the UN-HABITAT website.

Mediation has a long and rich history of service to communities large and small. Mediators over the centuries have included male and female public officials of various kinds, i.e. diplomats, politicians, religious leaders, and most importantly, locally elected, appointed, even anointed leaders. Mediation is an important tool for resolving conflicts and differences within local governments and communities.

As mentioned earlier, mediation involves an acceptable, impartial, and neutral third party who has no authoritative decision-making powers. Based on these criteria, there are situations in which it would be inappropriate for locally elected officials to perform the role as the mediator. You could hardly be seen as impartial mediating a dispute between the local government elected body and the union representing your policemen and women. On the other hand, there are so many situations where you can become involved as a mediating elected leader. Let's take a look at a few possible mediating scenarios:

❏ Two neighbourhood associations have been feuding over their programme domains. It is hurting their abilities to provide services to their local communities. They have asked your elected body to intervene as a neutral party to help them resolve the conflict. You have been appointed by the head of your local legislative body to mediate their differences.

❏ Several of your neighbouring local governments are involved in a dispute over the use of a sanitary landfill that has been serving all of their jurisdictions. They have turned to your local government for assistance in resolving the dispute. It's an opportunity to provide service and build intergovernmental relations among your neighbours.

❏ There is a gang war going on between two ethnic groups in your community. An innocent bystander has been murdered as a result of their conflict. Both sides are concerned about their reputations and their ability to represent their constituents. This was a wake-up call, and they need help. They have agreed to ask the elected official who represents their neighbourhoods to mediate their conflict before more violence occurs.

When is mediation appropriate?

There are some generally accepted conditions that make mediation an appropriate intervention. While some are embodied in the short scenarios just mentioned, it is helpful to look more closely at these conditions so you can have a better sense of when to consider mediation. Mediation is appropriate when:

❑ Strong emotions have muddled judgement.
❑ The parties know each other.
❑ There is no great disparity in the power relationship between parties.
❑ Maintaining the relationship between the parties is important.
❑ Those in conflict see the need to have a third party help them resolve their differences.
❑ There is a need for a quick decision.
❑ Lots of people are affected, e.g., a neighbourhood dispute.
❑ The parties involved want to avoid a costly, formal, public procedure like litigation.

There are also some conditions that make mediation an inappropriate intervention. These may be even more important to consider! Don't consider mediation when:

❑ There are indications that one party intends to use the mediation to further enflame the conflict or to achieve an ulterior motive.
❑ It is evident in preliminary discussions that the parties are not willing to listen to each other.
❑ Parties are too disturbed to work toward a collaborative agreement.
❑ There is a power imbalance between the feuding parties that makes mutual decision making unlikely.
❑ Key persons or parties are unwilling to participate in the process.
❑ It is unlikely that any agreement that has been reached will be implemented.

These conditions suggest that the decision to mediate should be based on a clear understanding of the circumstances that exist between those in conflict. It's an excellent tool for resolving conflicts and differences but it's not for every confrontational situation. On the other hand, conflict is a source of energy. It can be either productive or destructive. Mediation is a tool to help those with serious disagreements to channel their energy for mutual gain.

The "how-to" of mediation

There are many models of mediation to consider. In the UN-HABITAT publication cited earlier, there are three different models outlined in some detail. One has four steps and many sub-steps; another has seven steps; and the final includes twelve steps. Based on whom you listen to, mediating can be complicated. On the other hand, concerned men and women have been mediating disputes in their communities, families, churches, businesses, and even nations for centuries. And guess what! The vast majority of these men and women never read a book on how to do it. Based on these somewhat contradictory thoughts, we have summarized below a practical and commonly used approach to mediation.

Stage One: Pre-mediation planning
Once the parties agree to work with a mediator, help them to understand the process and trust both you and the process. This includes gaining a mutual understanding of how the process will work; understanding the guidelines of engagement such as confidentiality and who makes the decisions, considering logistics such as where the mediation will take place, and developing a rapport among the parties to the mediation.

Planning should also include selection of a venue that provides privacy and rooms for holding joint meetings with those in dispute as well as smaller rooms for meeting with them separately. Anything you can learn about what has created the disagreement or conflict will be important, not for making up your mind ahead of time but to help you understand the circumstances that have resulted in the dispute.

Stage Two: Beginning the mediation
This initial stage covers introductions (you can assume the warring parties know each other), ground rules you think are important, logistics such as the time you think it will take to reach an agreement and where to get a cup of coffee, and how the process works, i.e., the possibility that you might want to meet separately with the parties to explore options for resolution.

Stage Three: Defining the issues
This is also referred to by some as providing "uninterrupted time" for those in dispute to tell their side of the story. It will be important to help them understand the importance of listening to each other in as courteous manner as possible given the circumstances. It is advisable to ask the most agitated party to speak first. There are to be no interruptions or rebuttals during the time each person is speaking.

Stage Four: Exchange time
After the individual presentations, it's time to begin the dialogue to help all concerned better understand the nature of the conflict. This is the time to ask questions, explore assumptions behind the conflict, and look for common

ground. As mediator, you will want to control this session, make sure that each party to the conflict has an opportunity to contribute, and look for understanding and opportunities for resolution.

You may also want to hold separate meetings with the parties to the conflict if it looks like this might help. You might want to check out a person's concerns more thoroughly, perhaps confront unhelpful behaviour, or help them think through their options.

Stage Five: Generating options to resolve the dispute
At this point, you might want to summarize what you see as the issues to be resolved. List them on a blackboard or newsprint so they can be seen by both sides. Elicit options for resolving each issue, evaluate and refine them, and test for agreement on each. This is the stage where you can bring into use the tools in Chapter Five on Decision Making.

Stage Six: Get it in writing
This is the time to build the agreement with the disputing parties. Detail who will do what and when. Emphasize positive, doable, acceptable actions. Make sure the agreement is even-handed and not conditional. Have all parties sign copies of the agreement. Close the session.

Mediation is an important tool for elected men and women to have in their tool box. And, there are many ways to mediate disputes. While the literature on conflict resolution is rich in options, don't be discouraged. Most of us have developed skills over time in helping those who are caught up in disputes and conflict. Rely on your experience. If the conflict is too explosive and deep-seated, you will probably want to call in professional mediators. Otherwise, sharpen your own facilitating and mediating tools and let people know you are willing to help them resolve their differences.

> *To think justly, we must understand what others mean; to know the value of our own thoughts, we must try their effect on other minds.*

> **William Hazlitt, 19th Century English Essayist**

Reaching consensus

Consensus building, or reaching consensus, is another form of mediation and like mediation is a facilitated process. Since consensus has become an important process for reaching agreement on complex, multi-partied interests and concerns, it can hardly be ignored. John Kitzhaber, a recent governor of the state of Oregon, said, "I use consensus processes to resolve

public policy problems simply because it works. The complex nature of issues today requires an integrated collaborative approach to ensure sound, lasting decisions." Those who promote policy consensus initiatives are quick to point out that most of their efforts also involve multi-party conflicts. Given this, consensus building will be on the same shelf in your facilitating library of tools as mediation. Nevertheless, it is different enough to consider as an elected leadership competency.

Consensus is a process by which all members of a group agree to support a group action. While individual members might not agree completely with the action, they agree to support it, both within and outside the group. Consensus is not a majority vote. Consensus is reached by dialogue, not voting. The Policy Consensus Initiative (PCI) organization in its publication *A Practical Guide to Consensus* provides what they call a practical definition of consensus in the public policy arena where they operate.

According to PCI, consensus has been achieved when:
- ❑ The parties have reached a meeting of the minds sufficient to make a decision and carry it out;
- ❑ No one who could block or obstruct the decision or its implementation will exercise that power;
- ❑ Everyone needed to support the decision and to put it into effect will do so.[34]

This doesn't mean there is unanimity of thought or an abandonment of values. It is just the opposite. A well-constructed agreement can represent diverse values and interests. In other words, it is a process by which diverse interests and points of view can achieve consensus on a thorny set of issues and concerns that everyone involved in the process might not like totally but are prepared to live with.

In case your head is spinning with all these definitions of various ways to facilitate group decision making, we will only mention that PCI came up with more than twenty terms for consensus processes. Many include the words facilitated, mediated, negotiated, and collaborative in various combinations. All of these words and terms have one thing in common. They describe a process where individuals are working together in one way or another to achieve something of importance to them individually and collectively. They have a shared purpose and need, they speak frankly and listen carefully; and they engage in productive give-and-take until they produce results that are acceptable to all concerned.

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[34] Arthur, Jim, Christine Carlson, and Lee Moore. *A Practical Guide to Consensus.* (Santa Fe, New Mexico. Policy Consensus Initiative, 1999) p. 6.

A reflective opportunity

Does reaching consensus sound like an approach you might use in your local government and community to address a multi-party issue that is always in your face and never seems to go away on its own? Take a moment and think about a policy issue or programme concern that your elected body keeps putting on the "back burner" because there doesn't seen to be a solution. Jot it down.

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....
Why do you think it remains on the back burner - unaddressed and unresolved?

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....
Do you think some kind of consensus building process might help? If so, describe how you would go about getting others to join you in such an initiative.

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....

Do you have the patience to wait till your mud settles and the water is clear? Can you remain unmoving till the right action arises by itself?

Lao Tzu, 6th Century BC, Chinese Philosopher

When is consensus appropriate?

Consensus building may be useful to your local government and community when one or more of the following situations exist.

1. There is an issue that cuts across several departments or jurisdictions and everyone says, "It's not our problem." Consequently, nothing happens to resolve it.

2. Without broad-based support for a policy or programme, it is unlikely that it will be enforceable.

3. While your local government can take actions on a particular issue or concern, it will have little influence on the overall outcome because other local governments need to also be involved.
4. Getting consensus will result in better solutions.
5. Cooperation is needed from others to assure that our objectives can be met.
6. Certain programmes and services are not feasible without cost-sharing arrangements.

This list of potential candidates for some kind of consensus building arrangements could easily be expanded. The institutional options could include departments within your local government; your local government and community-based, non-governmental and/or private organisations; adjoining local governments; and state and national governments. John Mack, a noted psychiatrist and author, once asked his son, "How do you make a difference in the world?" His son replied, "By taking action." Mack responded, "No, you make a difference with ideas...then you take action."

How consensus building works

The consensus process involves four stages:[35]
Stage One: Planning
❑ Someone of influence and persuasion decides that the consensus process could be used to address a problem that has been plaguing the local government and community for years without any successful resolution. The problem cuts across several jurisdictions and affects public and private institutions alike. (That someone could be you!)
❑ Decide who needs to be involved in forging the consensus.
❑ This process will need a facilitator. You will want someone who can be impartial, neutral and not involved as one of the decision makers.
❑ The facilitator and a planning team organise the consensus dialogue, i.e., place, time, etc.

Stage Two: Building consensus
❑ Agree on the purpose for building consensus and what the end product might look like.
❑ Share views, information, insights, needs and offers. On these last two items, we are talking about what you need from the decision and what you are willing to offer in return as an

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[35] Our appreciation and apologies to PCI for the opportunity to use their ideas (the appreciation part) and to mangle them so they fit into a few paragraphs (the apologies). For those who want more information on the Policy Consensus Initiative, log on to: www.agree.org

elected body or local government.

- ❏ Generate options for addressing the need for consensus.
- ❏ Develop criteria for assessing the options.
- ❏ Come up with those options that address the issues and accommodate all interests - consensus!
- ❏ Put it in writing and have all the key parties to the consensus sign it to signify their commitment to it.

Stage Three: Implementation

- ❏ Each implementing agency develops an action plan and shares it with all other agencies and participants in the consensus building process.
- ❏ Consensus is reached on moving ahead with implementation.
- ❏ Implementation takes place, key stakeholders and constituencies are kept informed, and impact assessments conducted to assure success.

Stage Four: New opportunities are discovered to continue the collaboration

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....

....

....

(fill in the blanks)

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead, 20th Century American Anthropologist

Meetings, meetings, meetings

Going from consensus building to meetings looks like a big step backwards. Even the thought of meetings can put you to sleep. However, you probably spend more time in meetings than almost any other thing you do as an elected official. Given this reality, it's time to take on meetings as your next facilitating challenge. Before considering what you can do to make meetings more effective and obviously more efficient, let's spend a moment or two identifying some of the problems that plague meetings the world over.

- ❏ The goals and expectations are unclear.
- ❏ The meeting was scheduled to start an hour ago.
- ❏ Nobody seems to be in charge.
- ❏ There's no agenda.

❑ The discussion drifts from one issue to another without bringing closure to anything.

❑ Everyone seems to be talking at once.

❑ You're always sitting where you can't see what's going on.

❑ Somebody always seems to dominate the discussion.

❑ You feel manipulated - like a "rubber stamp" - since you didn't know what the meeting was about.

❑ The person responsible for chairing the meeting is out of town. Unfortunately, she didn't tell anyone the meeting was to be cancelled.

It seems that every culture suffers these meeting maladies and yet they can be fixed with a bit of planning, good staff work, wisdom, and courage. But, before we start discussing things you can do to make meetings in general more productive, we need to address the "official" mantle that hangs over many of the meetings you attend as an elected official. We recognize that many of these meetings are prescribed by law. Since these laws may vary from country to country, we will leave it to you to worry about how to "meet within the law." Of course, meeting the legal mandates is only part of holding effective official meetings. There are many ways an official meeting can be unproductive even when it is legal.

Before we look at some ways you can give your meetings a maintenance check-up, let's look at all the various roles you can perform in a meeting to make it more productive, and interesting. These roles have to do with helping achieve the purpose of the meeting, i.e. the task functions, and keeping the members of the group working effectively together, i.e. the maintenance functions.

Task functions

Information/opinion generator. Includes giving information or opinions you might have that will help others achieve the tasks of the meeting and seeking information and opinions from others who are reluctant to make contributions during the meeting.

Clarifier. How many times have you been in a meeting and known some point was not clear, but no one was willing to "speak-up"? A clarifying question at this point might have put the discussion back on track and, just as important, saved everyone's time.

Elaborator. Sometimes an idea or recommendation needs to be expanded upon so everyone understands what is being said. Elaborating or clarifying helps build on the contributions of meeting members and tests the adequacy of the communication that is taking place.

Summarizer. Have you ever been in a meeting that gets to a point where no one remembers what has been said? This usually happens when no one has taken the time or effort to summarize what's been said. If there is a

blackboard or newsprint available, make use of it. Your summary will be more effective when it is written and posted where everyone can see it.

Consensus tester. Often meetings go on long after agreement has been reached because nobody has checked with the group to see if members are ready to decide. A simple little query like, "Are we ready to make a decision?" can move the meeting forward. Don't hesitate to test for consensus when it seems most men and women are ready to commit to a decision.

All of the functions just reviewed are what the group process specialists call task functions. They are designed to help groups deal with the task at hand, make a decision, provide information or ideas for consideration, solve a problem, or resolve a conflict. All these task-oriented functions are concerned with the "why-are-we-here what-do-we-need-to-do?" kinds of issues.

Maintenance functions

There are also functions that help groups build better relations among members and to maintain those relationships. Groups have a tendency to get bogged down in interpersonal matters. Groups that have been working together for a while are like an old car. If you don't provide routine "maintenance," it's sure to break down. Here are some things you can do to keep groups from "breaking down." They are concerned with the "how-are-we-working-together?" issues.

Gatekeeper. How many times have you been in a meeting dominated by one or two individuals while others, who have valuable contributions to make, remain silent? When this happens, it is important for someone to act as a gatekeeper to get more people involved in the discussion.

Encourager. Sometimes, particularly at neighbourhood meetings where some men and women may feel reluctant for one reason or another to contribute their ideas, it is important to encourage them to be heard. Sometimes this encouragement is as simple as recognizing individuals and helping them realize they are being accepted by other meeting members.

Harmonizer/compromiser. Public meetings can sometimes experience breakdowns in communications. Members start to argue or take positions to maintain their own status rather than help the group do what it has come together to do. While disagreement can be healthy in meetings, it needs to be focused on the task and not personalized.

Housecleaner. Have you ever been in a meeting when there is so much confusion, anger, or just plain avoidance of what you're trying to do that the only solution is to "clean house." We've seen councils reach this stage of counter-productivity. Rather than wait for the electorate to "clean house" at election time, it behoves councils that have fallen into this trap to take the broom in hand and do their own house cleaning. This is when you need to be courageous, to step in and say, "Whoa! Stop! Let's take a look at what's happening here." You look at the interpersonal garbage that has accumulated during your work together and make some decisions about

getting rid of it. You are admitting that you're not working well together, and you need to develop some new standards of performance.

Giving your official meetings a maintenance check-up

To help you think about the non-legal aspects of your official meetings, we've put together a short checklist. We suggest you complete the tasks involved in responding to the checklist, make photocopies of the checklist, have your elected colleagues also complete the checklist, and hold a discussion on how to improve your public meetings. We realize there are many more aspects of your meetings that could be added to the list. Those in the checklist are just to get you thinking about how to make this part of your official responsibilities more productive and hopefully more enjoyable.

In the checklist you will find three columns after each potential repair item. Yes and No are straight forward. Yes but means you agree, but there is room for improvement.

Task One
Official Meetings Preventative Maintenance Check-up
The blanks have been left for you to contribute other issues or concerns you might have about the way official meetings are conducted in your local government.

Potential Repair Items	Yes	Yes But!	No
1. The rationale for holding official meetings is always clear.			
2. All meetings are preceded by an agenda.			
3. Items on the agenda are supported with documentation.			
4. The agenda and supporting materials are received in time to be studied by each elected member.			
5. The agenda and supporting documents are clear and understandable.			
6. The public is notified of all public meetings.			
7. There is an allotted time for citizens to speak.			
8. Meetings start on time.			
9. Meetings end on time.			
10. All officials attending the meeting have opportunities to voice their opinions.			
11. Meetings are productive.			
12. Staff members are given opportunities to provide technical and professional input when appropriate.			
13. Discussions of complex and ambiguous issues are encouraged.			

14. Differences of opinion are encouraged.			
15. Conflict is managed effectively.			
16. Side conversations are kept to a minimum.			
17. I believe my contributions to these meetings are valued.			
18.			
19.			
20.			

Task Two

For those items where you marked the "Yes But" column, list below the specifics of what bothers you about each and what you might be able to do about them to overcome your concerns.

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For any "No" votes you might have cast, we recommend that you and your elected colleagues hold an informal session where these issues can be discussed and decisions made to improve your official meetings. After all, they represent the most important time you spend together on your official duties as an elected man or woman.

Meetings are indispensable when you don't want to do anything.

John Kenneth Galbraith, 20th Century American Economist, Author, Diplomat

How to improve all those <u>other</u> meetings

Unfortunately, your meeting duties as an elected official don't end with official, regularly scheduled council meetings. There are also committee meetings, meetings with staff and different groups of people, briefings, neighbourhood sessions that have all the appearances of a meeting, and more. While you may not be able to influence the quality of all these meetings, it's worth a try. One way to bring about improvements generally is to have the meetings you are responsible for become role models for others. Here are a few ideas on how to do this.

Is this meeting necessary? The first question to ask about any meeting is, "Is this meeting necessary?" The second question, "If so, do I need to be there?" And, the third, "What would happen if I didn't go?" We're not

advocating that you skip meetings but the last question really does cut to the heart of the meeting's necessity, and, at times, its credibility.

Meetings should be purposeful. Every meeting should be driven by objectives or purpose. The purpose and objectives should be clear to all who are expected to attend. Is the meeting designed to: impart information or advice; provide instructions; consult with others; solve problems; make decisions; negotiate differences, or what? Every meeting should have a purpose.

Meetings should be planned. Planning involves the following several interrelated activities.

❏ **Planning involves deciding who needs to attend, and for what reason?** For example, are they invited to impart information; gather information they couldn't get otherwise; provide expertise; participate in decisions to be made; bring balance to the purpose of the meeting and the discussions; or protocol requirements? Another "who" question that needs to be considered is who will chair, or manage, the meeting? Often this is obvious. At other times, there might be options. One of the authors managed a technical assistance program for local governments in one of the transitional countries in Eastern Europe. The responsibility for planning and managing staff meetings was rotated among those on the staff. They were responsible for notices, preparing the agenda, and chairing the meeting. It provided professional development and helped to keep the meetings from becoming too deadly.

❏ **Planning includes preparing the agenda for the meeting.** The agenda is designed to define the boundaries of the meeting, convey expectations, give those attending an opportunity to think about their contributions, provide a roadmap to keep the meeting on track, assure a permanent record of what was discussed, and manage the time allotted. The agenda should also acknowledge opportunities for others to provide input.

❏ **Planning gets physical.** Don't take for granted that the space you always use for your meetings will be available. Check it out and reserve it. Will the space be adequate to accommodate those who will be attending? Is the arrangement of the furniture conducive to what you hope to achieve in the meeting? Will everybody be able to see others and to be heard by others? If you plan to break into smaller groups during the meeting, can this be done easily and effectively? Will you need any equipment, such as a microphone, podium, easels or whiteboards, an overhead projector, or technical apparatus to present a power point presentation? When planning the physical arrangements for a meeting, it is best to assume if something can go wrong, it will.

As an elected official, you may not have to personally do the planning for most of the meetings you are expected to attend. Nevertheless,

if you are responsible for chairing the meeting, you will need to be assured that all these planning concerns are addressed. If you aren't chairing these meetings, you still have a major time and personal investment in attending. Given this investment, don't hesitate to insist on quality control by those who do the planning.

Meetings should be managed. Rolf White, in a book of quotations on management, includes the following discourse on meetings by Harry Chapman.

> Having served on many committees, I have drawn up a list of rules. Never arrive on time: this stamps you as a beginner. Don't say anything until the meeting is half over; this stamps you as being wise. Be as vague as possible; this avoids irritating others. When in doubt, suggest that a sub-committee be appointed. Be the first to move for adjournment; this will make you popular. It's what everyone is waiting for.[36]

We reckon most of you can identify an elected colleague who lives by these rules when it comes to attending meetings. Assuming you would prefer to curb such behaviour in meeting you manage, here are some ideas to consider.

- ❏ Start the meeting on time even though some who have been invited aren't there. To do otherwise punishes the diligent and rewards the tardy. Rewarding tardiness encourages tardiness the next time you meet.
- ❏ If is a small enough group and many don't know each other, take time for introductions. If there are newcomers to an established group, make sure they are introduced and acknowledged.
- ❏ Review the meeting objectives and agenda, ask for comments, and make any appropriate changes.
- ❏ If there are rules, not those recommended by Harry Chapman, you might want to go over them briefly. They could include showing respect for other people's opinions, providing opportunities for others to speak, something on giving appropriate feedback if it's that kind of meeting, timing refreshment breaks, etc.
- ❏ If you see the need for either a timekeeper or note taker, you might want to ask for volunteers or better yet have them identified in advance. If you have, introduce these individuals and their respective roles. Otherwise, someone might think they are secret agents.
- ❏ Stick to your agenda but don't be dogmatic about this if one of your agenda items enflames the audience either positively or otherwise.
- ❏ Create and maintain a productive climate. Encourage active listening by listening actively to others. Speak frankly.

[36]   White, Rolf, *The Last Word on Management*. (London. W. Foulsham and Company, 1998) p.178.

Encourage feedback. Don't dominate the meeting.
- ❑ Encourage participation and pay particular attention to people from communities who have been culturally or conventionally excluded from participation and decision making.
- ❑ Use the questioning techniques covered in the Communicating Chapter. Encourage others to question as well.
- ❑ Give and get clarification of vague and complicated statements.
- ❑ Protect minority and unpopular opinions.
- ❑ Keep participants on track when they start to stray or begin to use the meeting as their personal "soapbox."
- ❑ Reduce tensions when conflict between others looks like it could get out of hand.
- ❑ Keep a watchful eye on the group's body language. It will tell you much about their collective frustration, boredom, or need for a break.
- ❑ Provide breaks before this happens.
- ❑ Don't give up control of the meeting.
- ❑ Bring the meeting to a close like you promised in the beginning unless the majority of participants want to continue. But before you do,
  - • summarize what happened and any actions agreed upon;
  - • decide on future meetings of the group and tie down the dates and venue if possible, and
  - • thank them for their participation.[37]

Meetings, meetings, meetings. We end our discussion of meetings where we began; trying to make the most of what many of you must feel is an elected official affliction. In spite of the negative reputation that meetings have garnered over the centuries, they remain a vital part of governing. As we have demonstrated, they can be improved, they can be managed, and they can be productive. Meetings don't have to be places where you keep minutes and throw away hours.

We're all in this together. If we succeed, we all succeed. If we fail, we all fail.

Many elected officials

Teams and team building

Some people will argue that elected officials should not consider themselves team players because of their representational responsibilities. It's a legitimate point of view and one to keep in mind as we consider this facet of developing your facilitating competencies. On the other hand, many elected men and women are charged with the responsibility of managing one or more local government departments depending on how your local government charter is written. In these situations, you may see yourself as a team leader or as someone who needs to understand teams and how they function.

Teams consist of two or more individuals working together based on the assumption that their collective achievements equal more than the sum of what they could achieve by working alone. It's called synergy.

Teams share a common purpose or goal that is clear to all members of the team. This is often referred to as focus.

Teams coordinate their activities, and collaborate with each other to achieve their purpose and goals.

Teams just don't happen. The individuals have to work hard to achieve the quality of synergy, focus, coordination, and collaboration that is recognized by each member and by those who observe their work that they are in fact a team.

Teams develop and use individual and collective work habits and personal values that define and drive the quality of their contributions and work together. It's known as teamwork.

Understanding teams and how to develop teams so they can work more efficiently and effectively are also important when working with community-based organisations. Given these non-representational aspects of your elected leadership role, we think it is important to know more about teams and teamwork, and to develop skills in team building.

Before going any further, it is important to define what we mean by team. Here are some generally accepted characteristics of teams that add up to a rather long but useful definition.

A reflective opportunity

Think of an experience when you were a member of a team that was given a specific responsibility to do something. What were the most rewarding aspects of that experience?

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What were some of the challenges you faced in working together?
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If you could relive that experience, what would you do differently to make it more successful and personally rewarding?
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How do you think teamwork as part of your facilitating competency can contribute to your leadership roles and responsibilities as an elected official?
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Team characteristics, in more detail

Carl Larson and Frank La Fasto in their book Teamwork identified a number of characteristics of effectively functioning teams.[38] Let's look at these in more depth from the perspective of your role as an elected official.

A clear and elevating goal. This is what some would call a sense of mission, an image of a desired state of affairs that inspires action. We have dealt in some depth with the issue of setting goals in the chapter on the policy-making competency. No one can question the importance of having clear and elevating goals as an elected body, but this doesn't by itself suggest that you and your colleagues operate as a team in forging these policies. Each elected official comes to the position with a different image about the problems of local government and what should be done about them. And yet without some clear sense of direction or an elevating goal, it may not be possible either to build an effective policy making body or to focus resources in such a way that they have an optimum impact on the future of the community.

A results-driven structure. Is your elected body organised in such a way that it works effectively to achieve results? You may need to look at this

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[38]   Larson, Carl E. and LaFasto, Frank M. J., *Teamwork* (Newbury Park, CA. 1989), p. 19

issue from at least two perspectives. First, how effective are you and your elected colleagues in your work as a total legislative body? And, how effective is the committee structure if this is part of your way of operating and making interim decisions? If specific committees need to know what other committees are doing or need to work more closely with them, have you developed a process for collaboration?

Are there higher laws that dictate rules and regulations that tie your hands as elected officials and prescribe a structure that doesn't work? If so, would it be possible to form an alliance with other elected bodies and get them changed? Many of the bottlenecks and dysfunctional procedures that many local governments struggle with are left over from the days of colonial and totalitarian rule. They are often anachronisms that have no place in the governance of contemporary communities. Form should follow function not constrain function, which is often the case in government.

Competent elected members. This characteristic is one over which you as an individual elected official have very little control, yet competence is a key factor in building an effective team. There are some things you can do, however, to develop your own competencies, and training is one of them. Another strategy is to concentrate individual competencies on specific issues or problem areas within the municipal operation. Perhaps you can become an expert in the area of health-care services while another elected official gains an expertise in public works functions. This specialization approach may also require a higher level of trust among you and your elected colleagues. In a truly democratic process, the definition of competence is decided by the ballot box and may have little relevance to the competence needs required to govern a complex urban settlement. Perhaps the most "facilitating" move that you as an elected official can make is to share with your colleagues any special knowledge you might have and to support training for all elected members.

Unified commitment. Forging a unified commitment is difficult where there are different political parties operating within your local government or factions that are driven by different values. And yet, there is the potential for strength when these differences exist. It is possible to have a unified commitment to the larger community and still represent differentiated perspectives on how to develop the community. The greatest facilitating strength you can bring to this qualification is the ability to listen objectively and to withhold judgement until all the perspectives are on the table.

Collaborative climate. A National League of Cities survey in the United States a few years ago found the number one problem of local elected officials was getting along with each other.[39] The one single most important element needed to foster collaboration and the ability to get along with each other is trust. For trust to exist within a team or elected body, there must be honesty, openness or a willingness to share and be receptive to others sharing, consistency or predictable behaviour, and respect.

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[39] National League of Cities, Program for Community Problem Solving, Vol. 1, "Case Summaries" (Washington, D.C. National League of Cities, 1988).

Facilitating

Standards of excellence. Standards of excellence refer to the way the elected body works, how it makes decisions, how it represents its constituents, the quality of its policy decisions, and its ability to work effectively with officials and organisations beyond the official boundaries of the elected body. As a facilitator, you might suggest that your elected body establish a set of standards by which it can assess the quality of its work as a legislative/representative team.

External support and recognition. These are characteristics in which the local elected team is head and shoulders above teams in the private sector. Your ultimate recognition is in your ability to get re-elected, and your support from the community is re-assessed at each of your official meetings. Nevertheless, it should not be taken for granted. Carrying out a constant dialogue with all sectors of the community is the best way to ensure that what you are doing is continuing to garner the support and recognition needed to operate as an effective elected body or team.

Principled leadership. Teams need leaders. It seems like an inconsistent message, doesn't it? But, the locus of leadership is not necessarily lodged in the position of the mayor or president of your elected body although that's the most logical place to look for it. The relationship between the elected official and his or her followers is transactional. Leaders need followers. If the citizens no longer trust you, it is difficult if not impossible to lead. When it comes to teams, it is possible for everyone to be a leader. Paradoxical? Yes, but then teams are not armies where rank determines one's worth and potential contribution.

As you look at these characteristics and qualities of an effective team, do you see anything that is inconsistent with your legislative role and responsibility? Probably not. Does this mean that you and your colleagues are a team or should operate as a team? These are questions that only you and your elected colleagues can answer. But, let's pursue this line of thinking further.

But MY constituents don't expect me to be a team player

Have you ever been confronted with the following situation? Your elected body is working effectively together, it has come up with policies or programmes that are in the best interest of the total community, but the constituents in your area of the city don't see it that way. They think you always cast your vote with the majority and ignore their needs, and they aren't very happy. What to do?

First, you are in a much better position to defend your decision if it is based on good information and an analysis of various alternatives.

Secondly, you may want to meet with representatives of your constituents to discuss your actions, why you believe they are in the best interests of the larger community, and how they will ultimately serve their needs as well.

There are no easy solutions to these kinds of conflicts. Your positions will be strengthened if you (a) are open about why you took the position you did, (b) have acted in what you believe to be the best interest of the local government (this does not rule out constituent-oriented decisions), and (c) are prepared to work to implement the final decision of your elected body, even if it is counter to the way you voted.

> *The inevitable end of multiple chiefs is that they*
> *fade and disappear for lack of unity.*
>
> **Napoleon Bonaparte, 19th Century Emperor of France**

Is team building the answer?

Sometimes elected bodies engage in something called "team building." This is a process that usually takes a concentrated period of time from one to three days. The elected men and women go off to a retreat setting to work on two major issues: (a) How are we working together as a team? and (b) What are the major issues and opportunities we need to be concentrating on in our elected leadership role? When elected officials take time to do some teambuilding, they usually work with an outside facilitator, someone from a training institution or management consulting firm who is skilled in working with small groups and has experience in these kinds of organisational interventions. Teambuilding can also involve skill-training or using the materials contained in this chapter series.

Another approach to teambuilding is to carry out these kinds of discussions among elected officials and key administrative staff. Elected official and staff interventions are particularly useful if problems have developed between the elected body and staff to the point where it is difficult to resolve them with a day-to-day, piecemeal approach. They are useful also when the elected body is involved in long-range planning and the input of the professional staff is important to its deliberations.

Team building can be an effective strategy to help your elected body work at a higher level of efficiency and effectiveness. It's an opportunity to do a little diagnostic work on the way you are working together, to give yourself a periodic "tune-up." It is also a strategy to use at the start of the yearly budget process when you may need to be more introspective about the future of your community and how local government can contribute to that future in a positive, sustained way.

Being a member of an effective team requires a wide range of skills and behaviour. It also requires the ability to work within an ambiguous relationship with your peers. On the one hand, it is virtually impossible to be effective as an elected body if you and your colleagues can't work together as a team. On the other hand, you can only be effective as an elected representative if you are willing and able to stand alone. It's one of those challenging paradoxes that make your role as an elected leader so special, and also difficult.

A reflective opportunity

We've introduced some ideas about a competency and role that may not be as familiar to you as some others - that of the team member. Spend a few moments reflecting about the team concepts we have introduced and how they might apply to your elected body. Do they make any sense in relation to your overall responsibilities and to your unique representational role and responsibilities? If so, how might you and your elected colleagues go about introducing these team concepts and strategies into your roles and responsibilities?

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Facilitating and other competencies

The facilitating competencies we have discussed cut across just about every other competency in this series. To be an effective facilitator, you must rely heavily on your communicating and enabling competencies. They certainly will come in handy when you get involved in institutional areas like financing, overseeing, and institution building. And how you use your power as an elected official will reveal much about whether you have learned the art and craft of facilitating. It goes without saying that making decisions and policies will test your ability to work effectively in groups and engage in such facilitating processes as mediation and consensus building. Like your communicating competencies, facilitating skills are designed to serve you well in just about every endeavour and responsibility you undertake as an elected official.

Key points

❑ Facilitating is a process where a man or woman who is acceptable to all members of the group, substantively neutral, and has no decision-making authority intervenes to help the group improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions.

❑ Facilitating is a skill based on group process and the values of valid and useful information, free and informed choice, and internal commitment to the choices made.

❑ Group effectiveness depends on a blending of task and relationship behaviours. They are often referred to as task and maintenance functions.

❑ Groups develop and mature through a process of forming, storming, norming, and performing.

❑ Conflict is inevitable in human relationships and different individuals have different ways they deal with conflict.

❑ The five most common approaches to conflict situations are: avoidance, accommodation, competition, collaboration, and compromise.

❑ Mediation is an important facilitating competency designed to help those in conflict reach their own mutually acceptable solutions.

❑ The art of mediation has a long history of service involving common men and women with uncommon desires to resolve conflicts and differences wherever they are found.

❑ Mediation involves a process of helping those in unresolved disputes explain their issues and concerns with each other, develop options for resolving them, and making a mutual compact to carry them out.

❑ Meetings are an essential but bothersome part of being an elected official.

❑ The good news is that meetings can be managed through pre-planning, active leadership, and a commitment to meet only when necessary for as short a time as possible.

❑ Teamwork is a legitimate elected-leadership process when it doesn't interfere with the representational role and responsibilities of elected men and women.

❑ The art and craft of facilitating cuts across all other elected leadership competencies. After all, democracy is a process that relies on groups of people working together.

❑ By the way, decision making is also an important facilitating skill. So important, in fact, that an entire chapter is devoted to it. If for some reason you missed this enlightening document, we refer you to Chapter 6: *The Decision Making Competency.*

Chapter 5:
The Using Power
Competency

Introduction

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Lord Acton, (1834-1902) British statesman

We've decided to start this essay with the Lord Acton quote because it may be the most frequently used statement to describe power. It would be dishonest to ignore power's decidedly bad reputation, particularly when it comes to governance. While power is essential to the political process, it scares many of us because it is so often misused by those in public office. Perhaps this explains why it's almost impossible to find a quotation about power from any quarter of the globe and its many cultures that is not negative. While this might not be the best barometer to measure how most quotable men and women feel about this attribute of leadership, they often set the standard for public opinion. In spite of these ominous signs, *we believe that power is at the heart of your ability to lead as an elected official. It can also be one of your most respected competencies in the judgment of others, when used with principle and compassion.*

The historian, James MacGregor Burns, helps provide the context for this discussion about the positive attributes of power. In his seminal book on leadership, Burns says, "Viewing politics as power has blinded us to the role of power in politics and hence to the pivotal role of leadership." He says we need to recognize that not all human influences are coercive and exploitive, nor are they mechanical and impersonal. We must see power - and leadership - not as things but as relationships and to analyze power in the context of human motives and physical constraints.[40]

> To define power not as a property or entity or possession but as a relationship in which two or more persons tap motivational bases in one another and bring varying resources to bear in the process is to perceive power as drawing a vast range of human behaviour into its orbit. The arena of power is no longer the exclusive preserve of a power elite or an establishment or persons clothed with legitimacy. Power is ubiquitous; it permeates human relationships. It exists whether or not it is quested for. It is the glory and the burden of most of humanity.[41]

While we happen to agree with Burns, we need to spend a few moments putting power into the context of the political process, the importance of representative and honest local governance as a worthy norm, and your role as an elected official.

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[40] Burns, James MacGregor, *Leadership,* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978.), p.11.

[41] Burns, p.17

Nearly all human beings can stand adversity,
but, if you want to test their character, give them
power.

Abe Lincoln,
16th President of the United States of America

A reality check

Power dominates political and governance processes. It matters naught whether we are talking about democracy, theocracy, oligarchy, monarchy, or totalitarianism, the use of power is a dominant factor in all governing systems. And it is the one competency that is abused most often by those who yield *power.* Hopefully, your local government is immune from such abuses, but we doubt it. Before you get too upset by this presumptuous comment, we want to remind you that there are all kinds of power sources, and not all of them lead to unlawful or corrupt actions. While some uses of power are blatant and corrupt, others are more benign and rooted in the culture of politics.

For example, if an elected official:
- ❏ steals money from the public treasury,
- ❏ takes a bribe,
- ❏ bends the rules so only his friends can bid on a huge public contract,
- ❏ pressures local government staff to fix traffic tickets, or
- ❏ pays off the police to ignore a prostitution ring he operates in the city;

There would probably be little disagreement that these are all examples of misuse of political and position power. While you may argue about the seriousness of each example, we believe you would agree that they all represent the misuse of power and a violation of the public trust.

Let's look at some other examples of the misuses of power by elected officials that may not even show up on the local political radar screen. For example,
- ❏ women are rarely if ever represented on the local government's various boards and commissions and not one woman serves on the elected body;
- ❏ schools in the poorer parts of your city never get an equitable share of school supplies, qualified teachers, and building repairs;
- ❏ a large industry is known to be polluting the ground water, but the information is held from the public at the request of

Using Power

one of your elected colleagues who just happens to be the plant manager;

❑ promotion of a highly regarded senior technician in the public health department has been tabled repeatedly by the elected body because she doesn't belong to the political party in power; or

❑ the elected body just voted to spend scarce local revenues for a soccer stadium to keep a private franchise team from relocating to another city when the school system is overcrowded and in critical need of new facilities.

These kinds of elected leadership power uses, or perhaps denial that they may represent the misuse of political power, are more common in local governments. While they may not be corrupting, they demonstrate the many ways that political power and authority are misused by local governments. They may not land you in jail as an elected official, but they can erode the trust and confidence your constituents have in your performance as a public official.

Now the good news: All these examples can be turned around by elected officials who use their many sources of power to serve the public good in principled and courageous ways. In other words, using power cuts both ways. While power is often misused within local governments, those same sources of power can be directed to build strong, truly representative and responsive local governments. Before we look at how you can use power as an elected official, we need to spend a few moments talking about those components that make up your personal power base.

A reflective opportunity

Take a moment or two and think about the various examples that we have mentioned about the abuse of power within local governments. Do some of these sound familiar? If so, it might be helpful to jot down some examples of the misuse of power that takes place within your own governing body or local government administration.

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Given these examples, what are some actions you might take as an elected leader to create a better working atmosphere to curb the abuse of power within your local government?

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What is power?

Max Weber, the conceptual parent of modern-day bureaucracy, defined power as *the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which that probability rests.* To put Weber's definition into the context of a collective locally elected body, he is saying that any one of the situations described above results from the elected officials being able to carry out these acts regardless of resistance from the community and the basis for using their power to these ends.

Warren Bennis, a modern day critic of bureaucracy, says *power is the basic energy to initiate and sustain action translating intention into reality.* Building on the Bennis definition, local elected leadership is the ability to use power as an energy source for the public good. However, it needs to be transformed from intent to action through deliberate acts of public leadership.

With the possibility of overwhelming you with definitions, here's one more that we find more useful for this discussion. James Lucas says *power is a human force for achievement or obstruction that can be used individually or collectively for the constructive good, or the destruction, of other people and institutions.*[42] As Burns reminds us, it is important to see power not as a commodity to be used but as a relationship to be honoured. Those relationships involve the use of a rich mix of power using strategies available to elected officials. We will explore those options in a moment but first, here's an opportunity to reflect on what has just been said.

> *There is almost no troubled situation that cannot be improved by rearranging it to distribute power more equally.*
>
> **Virginia Satir, 20th Century American Author**

Power and culture

Philip Swanson, Director of the Aberdeen Seminar on Culture and Power in the Global System at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, reminds us that *culture and power are inseparable. Looking at them together broadens our ideas of power or politics, encouraging us to examine also gender relations, race relations, sexuality, and the politics of everyday life.* While Professor Swanson takes a global perspective on these intertwined issues and

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[42]   Lucas, James, *Balance of Power,* (New York: American Management Association, 1998) p.13.

relationships in his seminar, we want to bring them down to a local government level for a bit more scrutiny.

Paul Kivel, in an insightful article on the culture of power, makes the following observations:

"If you are a woman who has ever walked into a men's meeting, or a person of colour who has walked into a white organisation, or a person of one religious faith who has entered the sacred space of another religion, then you know what it is like to walk into a culture of power that is not your own. You may feel insecure, unsafe, disrespected, unseen or marginalised. You know you have to tread carefully.

"Whenever one group of people accumulates more power than another group, the more powerful group creates an environment that places its members at the cultural centre and other groups at the margins. People in the more powerful group (the "in group") are accepted as the norm, so if you are in that group it can be very hard for you to see the benefits you receive."[43]

The power of culture, as Kivel describes it, tends to reinforce the prevailing hierarchy of how decisions are made, how resources are allocated, how things get done. By its very nature, it limits others from participating on an equal footing. They often feel marginalized, even powerless in their interactions and relationships with those who hold the power.

For example, in many local governments around the world there are a disproportionate number of men who serve on governing bodies. The senior management staff of local governments may be predominantly male, or represent a certain class or ethnic group within your society. Often the culture of power represented by these inequities has become so accepted by those who benefit from it that it is difficult for them to see let alone understand the consequences of their behaviour.

There are many vehicles within local governments that create power imbalances that eat away at the basics of good governance. For example:
- ❑ political practices and economic realities that exclude women, ethnic minorities, or the economically disadvantaged from running for public offices;
- ❑ employment practices that ignore gender and other imbalances when staffing public organizations;
- ❑ lack of transparency that enables public resources to favour those who have always had privileged access to them in the past;
- ❑ local laws that were enacted in less enlightened times that continue to define the limits of public involvement by certain segments of your communities; and

[43] Kival, Paul. "*The Culture of Power.*" What Makes Racial Diversity Work in Higher Education: Academic Leaders Present Successful Policies and Strategies, (Edited by Frank Kale), (Sterling VA, Stylus Publishing, 2004.)

❏ not the least, governing systems that allow corruption to flourish within the political and administrative ranks of local governments.

The culture of power, moulded by decades of closed power structures, limited relationships, and routine political and administrative behaviour within your local government, may be keeping you from developing the full potential of your community's human resources. Breaking those moulds involves individual and community awareness raising, expansion of choices that are open to all members of your community, programmes to build self-confidence of those who have been marginalized in the past, greater involvement of the diversity within your community in decision-making, increased access to and control over the wide range of resources available within the community, and a concerted effort to curb corruption. Since the existence of corruption is often linked unfairly to national and regional cultures, it is important to sort this piece of the puzzle out in relation to your uses of power as an elected official.

The link between corruption and the culture of power

While the corruption of public institutions has been described in many ways, we want to talk about it in terms of the misuse of various kinds of elected leadership power. Corruption can be fuelled by the misuse of your legitimate powers as elected representatives of the people, by the rewards that you can provide to your friends, by coercion through the misuse of the "powers" of your office, by manipulating information in less than transparent ways, and in your connections with those who connive with public officials to exploit the public trust for personal gain.

In *Tools to Support Transparency in Local Governance,* a joint publication of UN-HABITAT and Transparency International, the authors make the following point about culture and corruption. "Some would argue that corruption is culturally determined, that is, practices viewed as corrupt in one country may be legitimate business practice in another. Others argue that corruption is beneficial, acting as 'grease' to speed up otherwise inefficient institutions. Both arguments, however, are incorrect."[44] They go on to say that corruption has negative impacts on economic growth, poverty reduction efforts, safety, environmental health and the sustainability of cities, in addition to political stability. Equally important is the horrendous impact it has on the very poor in our communities who have no resources to compete with those willing to pay bribes. In other words, they have been excluded from the culture of power that exists within their communities.

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[44] UN-HABITAT, Tools to Support Transparency in Local Governance (Nairobi, Kenya, UN-HABITAT, 2004), p. 24.

This admission about the cancerous results of corruption is an amazing turn around on the part of multi-lateral and bi-lateral development institutions in recent years. It is also a major breakthrough in understanding the myths that perpetuated corruption as an essential component in what we have been calling a culture of power. In 2000, World Bank President James Wolfensohn made a startling admission in a speech to a group of NGO representatives"

"Until three years ago, the word 'corruption' was never mentioned at the World Bank…When I got to the Bank, the General Counsel called me in to give me a briefing on what I could do and what I could not do as President of the Bank. And he said the one thing you cannot do is talk about the 'c' word. And I said what is the 'c' word? He said the 'c' word is corruption. Under the charter of the Bank you are not allowed to talk about politics and corruption is politics… you can talk about social justice…poverty… but not the 'c' word."[45]

Fortunately Wolfensohn, after two years of operating under this development myth about the need to condone and therefore perpetuate corruption by exercising institutional avoidance behaviour, attacked this pervasive culture of power head on. As a result of this and other enlightened views, the dreaded "c" word is now spoken freely. We don't want to imply that the World Bank was the only international, national, or local organization that was guilty of doing business with blinders on. It was widespread and still remains a challenge for those who engage in the public's business.

We want to put this fascinating story into the context of Paul Kivel's observations about the culture of power we shared with you earlier. If you recall, he said whenever one group of people accumulates more power than another group, the more powerful group creates an environment that places its members at the cultural centre and other groups at the margins. This reinforces the way decisions are made, how resources are allocated, how things get done. It limits others from participating on an equal footing. They often feel marginalized, even powerless, in their interactions and relationships with those who hold the power. In other words, the international development community was rendered speechless on corruption by those who controlled the process.

We have dwelled upon the notion of a culture of power because it says volumes about how public officials make decisions. It also provides valuable insights into how you can use the many sources of power that you have available to redefine the culture of power that may currently exist in your community. For example, is the "c" word off limits? Do you talk openly about the influence of years of male-dominated political parties in the selection of candidates for public office? Do you cater to certain business or

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[45] Marquette, Heather, Donors Seek the Right Approach to Corruption, Local Government Brief, (Budapest, LGI, Open Society Institute, Spring 2004), p. 5.

other interests within the community in the allocation of public resources because it's the way it has always been done? Do you dismiss the poor and the disadvantaged because they really don't have any power, or so it seems, to contribute to the betterment of the community? Every community evolves its own culture of power over years and decades of unchallenged assumptions and norms about how things should be done. Your potential as an elected leader to change the *culture of power* that exists in your local government to make it more inclusive and equitable is directly related to your abilities and willingness to use your power competencies.

Carolyn Hannan, Director of the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, talks about a "nuanced definition of power" in shaping future public policies and programmes to be more inclusive and equitable. From our perspective, her insights on how to change power cultures is a perfect way to bring this part of our discussion about using power to a close.

> "Power is seen less in terms of domination over others and more in terms of facilitating the increase of choice and voice and control and autonomy. Alternative ways of conceptualising power focuses more on processes of power - defining power as 'power to' - generative or productive power, which creates new possibilities and actions without domination; 'power with' - in the sense of groups tackling problems together; and 'power from within' - emphasising the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each person."[46]

Before we look at the various kinds of power that each of you have at your command as an elected leader, we don't want to miss the opportunity to have you think about the culture of power within your own governing body and local government organization.

A reflective opportunity

Taking your lead from Carolyn Hannon, consider the following queries about power.

What **power to** opportunities do you see your governing body having available to create new possibilities and actions that are more inclusive and equitable?

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[46] Hannan, Carolyn, Transforming Empowerment and Gender Mainstreaming, (Seoul, Korea: International Symposium on a New Vision fro Gender Policy: Equity, Development and Peace, April, 2003.), p.3.

What **power with** opportunities do you see your governing body having available to work with others to tackle long standing problems within your community?

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What **power from within** possibilities can you tap into to help change the culture of power that now defines your local government's quality of governance in serving all its citizens without prejudice and exclusion?

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Power is not an end in itself, but an instrument that must be used toward honourable ends.

Jeanne Kilpatrick, 20th Century American Diplomat

Sources of power available to elected officials

You as an elected man or woman are potentially powerful. Your elected body has even more potential power. To better understand your potential for being more powerful as an elected leader or an elected governing body, we have divided the various sources of potential power into three categories. They include your: *legitimate power sources* which come with the office of elected service; *personal power sources* which more often than not depend on others believing you possess them; and *creative power sources* which rely on your ability to combine resources and various other power sources to get things done.

Legitimate power sources

Elected officials by virtue of their office have authority to act on behalf of their constituents. Authority is the legal framework within which you and your elected colleagues work to get things accomplished on behalf of your community. This legal mechanism is the system that gives you the power to formulate and implement collective values. This legislated authority is what allows you and your colleagues to allocate scarce resources within the

community, to enact ordinances and legislation to control the individual and collective behaviour of citizens, and to plan and implement the overall development of the territory in which you govern. Now, that's a lot of power!

It's also the type of power that gets you and your colleagues into a lot of trouble from time to time. Legitimate power can become illegitimate in the hands of the unscrupulous and the uncaring. But your elected body's authority to act, your basis to use legitimate power, can also be described in terms of two other types of power: **reward power** and **coercive power.** In other words, as a body of elected officials you have the right and ability to reward and **punish** others.

1. **Reward Power.** The use of your legitimate Reward Power is among your most flexible sources of power. It can be initiated and implemented either individually or collectively by members of the elected body. Operating as an individual elected official you can reward your constituents by doing favours, recognizing the efforts of others, helping them get access to various public facilities and services, and recommending individuals for appointments to various local government boards and commissions. Collectively, elected bodies can use their legitimate powers to dole out all kinds of rewards: contracts, changes in land-use zoning that often result in instant financial gain to individuals and groups, official recognition to individuals and groups for all sorts of reasons, jobs and promotions to select individuals, building new schools and health centres in select neighbourhoods, and providing a myriad of services from garbage pick-up to police protection. Your reward powers are only constrained by the resources you can garner and your imagination. It is also one of those power sources that is most susceptible to misuse.

2. **Coercive Power.** Local government elected bodies through their institutional powers of authority can arrest individuals, impose fines and penalties, make legitimate decisions that are meant to harm certain parties i.e. location of public facilities, take away privileges, dismiss employees who aren't associated with their political parties, charge fees designed to intimidate businesses they believe are undesirable, and order police actions that are designed to target selected audiences. If you think legitimate power can be coercive, consider the potential power of using your legitimate powers illegitimately. It's not beyond the imagination of some unscrupulous elected officials.

Personal power sources

The next four sources of power based on *expertise, information and ideas, image, and the right contacts,* are only available to use as power sources if other people believe you possess them. In other words, if you believe you are an expert in some area of specialization but no one else thinks you are, it is

hardly a source of power to exploit. Now, you can turn that around if you convince others that you really are an expert. The same is true of the others. For example, you may in fact have "connections," but they don't translate into a source of power if those you are "connecting with" don't reciprocate. In other words, these sources require a transactional relationship between you and others before they become empowering options you can employ to get things done.

3. **Expertise Power.** Expertise can be individual or institutional. Elected bodies develop over time various kinds of expertise that give them power. As an individual elected official, you also have the opportunity to develop specialized expertise, or you might be elected based on your previous expertise. Physicians often run for office to use their medical expertise to bring about reforms or to fight for more health-related expenditures from the local government's budget.

4. **Information and Idea Power.** This power source is both individual and collective. Most elected officials run for office on a platform of ideas and possible policy reforms. If they are elected based on these ideas, it demonstrates the power of ideas. Information is potentially powerful if it can be used to provide evidence for elected bodies to take certain actions. For example, the city engineer has documented that large trucks are severely damaging one of the major bridges that provides access to your community. He recommends immediate actions to stop trucks of a certain size from using the bridge. Information can also be withheld which is a negative use of this source of power.

    The internet has become an enormous source of political power in some places based on its ability to get information to thousands of people simultaneously. While this has more direct application to larger units of government, it is an informational source that can also be tapped by local governments and elected men and women to increase their power bases.

5. **Image Power.** Image power is largely in the eyes of the beholder but nevertheless a source of power to many elected officials. Officials who engender respect, obedience, and allegiance from their constituents can use this adoration to promote policies that might otherwise be difficult to adopt within a community. How many times have you seen an elected official gain access to important information or been courted by a segment of the community because she is trusted?

6. **Proximity power.** The right contacts and connections can make you more powerful. Have you ever served with an elected official who was a close friend of the country's president or some other dignitary, who was married to a person who is a popular radio talk show host, or who has connections with a large ethnic community within your municipality that is beginning to develop political clout? If so, then you can appreciate the potential power these connections and contacts can bring to an individual who is serving on an elected body. Like most power sources, this one can cut both ways. Backroom political deals are cut among those who have connections.

Creative power sources

The final three sources of power, *catalytic, shared, and holistic,* depend on your creative talents to visualize how various combinations of resources and power sources can help you accomplish your goals. Once envisioned, of course, you also need the ability to put them together effectively.

7. **Catalytic power.** This source of power results from your ability to put two or more sources of power together, each of which may not be sufficient to produce results by themselves. For example, many policy changes which represent the use of your legitimate power base as elected officials might not be possible without expert, information, and even contact power. Information power is magnified greatly when fused with legitimate power. Sound policies demonstrate this truism.

8. **Shared power.** This power source has become popular in recent years as individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions in various combinations come together to forge alliances and to interact for the purpose of achieving their separate or collective goals. For example, your elected body might forge an alliance with other elected bodies in your region to put together a programme to manage your solid waste needs. Or you join forces with health service providers to develop policies and joint programmes to limit the impact of a contagious disease. On rare occasions, elected bodies get in big trouble by sharing power with such unworthy collaborators as organized crime! This source of power could also be called "coalition power". We will return to the power of sharing when we discuss the Enabling competency.

9. **Holistic power.** This power source becomes possible not by combining other power sources which defines catalytic power but rather in combining several of the other competencies we have been talking about in this series. For example, you may combine your communicating, policy-making, and institution-building skills to create a new organization to work with street children. By pulling together your various competencies as individual and collective elected officials, you are able to accomplish goals that were previously impossible. Thinking and acting in holistic fashion can be powerful.

> *A sobering thought: What if, at this very moment, I am living up to my full potential?*
>
> **Jane Wagner,**
> **20th Century American Film Director-Producer**

Using Power

The power potential of individual elected leaders vs. elected bodies

Another way to look at the issue of power is whether you can act unilaterally or whether you need to act in concert with others. While the *legitimate powers* you possess as an individual elected official are individually conferred, they rarely can be exercised by individual elected officials. This is not necessarily the case with the mayor or other individuals who hold an office with its own source of legislated powers. But let's look at those sources of power that are conferred to you as a member of a larger body. On the whole, your ability to reward someone or some collective group, to punish someone or group with coercive power, or to use your legitimate source of power, legitimately, is either non-existent or severely limited by the fact that you are only one member of the legal body that has these powers. Given this, your real source of power with your peers is not in the reward-coercive-legitimate categories but rather in the use of the others. If, for example, you have what we have called *image power*, the combination of personal traits that other councillors find attractive and they are inclined to cast their vote in your favour because of these personal traits, then you have increased your power quotient.

The same is true of *expert power*. If your colleagues know you know more than they know about some topic under consideration, they may defer to your judgement in making decisions as a collective body. This would increase your power to get things done. But, it's not a given, is it? We've all

seen situations where someone has considerable expertise, but no one wants to listen to them because they are otherwise unattractive or have damaged their credibility as an expert for one reason or another.

The *information and ideas and proximity power sources* are more difficult to assess when the individuals operate within a system where power is collectively distributed. If you have information that others don't, and you use it judiciously and at the right time, it may give you considerable leverage or power with your peers when it comes time to vote. One of the authors had an experience as a city manager that demonstrates this point. The city council was about to extend a very lucrative water-use agreement to a local foundry based on some dubious criteria when the city manager informed the council that the foundry had been using city property illegally for years, property that figured into the new agreement. That information effectively changed the council's vote from one in the foundry's favour to one that was against it. We might also add that the disclosure nearly got the city manager fired from his job. It turned out the owner of the foundry had more "connection power" with the council than the city manager.

Catalytic power is one which has more promise and potency than most of us realize. Often the legal authority of the council is not sufficient to achieve complex projects or to initiate services that may be controversial and complicated. In these cases, it may make sense to review systematically the sources of power we've identified to determine if there are opportunities to use a combination of power sources to accomplish your goal.

Shared power has become increasingly popular with more and more attention given to such governance strategies as collaborating and enabling. These shared power initiatives are most appropriate in dealing with social, economic, and environmental concerns that spread freely across the political landscape creating the sense that everyone is affected but no one is in charge. Vivian Hutchinson, a trustee of the New Zealand Jobs Research Trust, describes the need for sharing power to resolve their national unemployment crisis.

"We are not going to solve unemployment and create enough jobs for New Zealanders unless a great variety of organisations learn more effective ways of working together. The issues of unemployment and poverty today are calling out for leadership that has very different skills - the skills that can build collaborative actions, and skills that can work across sectors and vested interests and achieve a common good. The strategic question is this: How do we share power between all those people, so that they can more effectively get on with their part of the solutions?"[47]

Holistic power takes its energy not from other sources of power but from combining the various elected leadership competencies that this series is addressing. When the elected officials of Msunduzi, South Africa, adopted

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[47] Hutchinson, Vivian, "*Co-operation, Collaboration and Co-ordination*" presented to the *Summer Heart Politics Gathering* at the Tauhara Centre in Taupo, New Zealand, January, 1999, p.3.

a comprehensive AIDS plan for its 3,500 employees, it called on a number of competencies to assure the success of the programme. The city was under siege from a HIV/AIDS pandemic. Approximately 18% of the general population was suffering from HIV/AIDS and this percentage was reflective of the city government's workforce infections. (Information power)

To address this internal problem, the Msunduzi officials used their policy-making and decision-making skills to develop a plan of action. They trained eighty staff members as peer educators emphasizing the importance of communicating competencies. (Expertise power) Using the facilitating competency, they conducted regular meetings for city employees where all aspects of HIV/AIDS were covered. The city council reallocated existing resources using the financing competency to reduce their dependency on external funding or loans. (Reward power) And when the programme was successful within the city government, they helped the University of Natal to develop a toolkit for other local governments. (Shared or coalition power) The methods pioneered and used in the City of Msunduzi have now been spread throughout the province demonstrating the use of the enabling competency. (Image power) It is obvious that the City of Msunduzi had engaged in several power strategies that add up to a holistic power strategy to not only address their own HIV/AIDS epidemic but to enable other municipalities to benefit from their efforts.[48]

> *In any great undertaking it is not enough for a person to act alone.*
>
> **Isna Lawica, (Lone Man), Teton Sioux tribe**

Sometimes elected leadership power is elusive and unpredictable

The power of the individual takes on an ironic twist if the council is split into two factions and one councillor is sitting in the middle of this split with no commitment to either side. This "middle person' may not be particularly powerful in his or her personal attributes. Nevertheless, people in this situation can and do in many situations wield a lot of power they wouldn't possess otherwise. Again, we would like to draw from our own experiences to demonstrate the point.

One of the authors lives in a small community where some citizens organized an effort to take over the local board of education because of rising costs and other concerns. The unhappy citizens were able to get five people elected on a last minute write-in ballot. Since the board has nine members,

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[48] This example was taken from the case study of Msunduzi in Sustainable Urbanisation, published jointly by UN-HABITAT, the British Government's Department of International Development, and the Development Planning Unit, University College London. 2002, pp. 180-1.

this meant they were successful in gaining the majority, and the power to control the votes and the agenda. Victory, yes, but only temporarily. One of the newly-elected board members decided he liked the incumbent board members better and moved across the aisle. He, in effect, negated all the success his former board members and their supporters were able to garner in a hotly contested election for control of the school system. In this case, an individual who possessed few of the many power competencies we have been discussing pulled off a stunning power play against his former colleagues. Needless to say, his *image power* among his former candidates for the board of education, if it ever existed, dropped to zero.

Before we continue, we want to give you an opportunity to reflect for a few moments about your efforts in the elected body or in other situations when you were in a position to exercise power as an elected official.

A reflective opportunity

Recall a time or two recently when you felt particularly *Powerful* as an elected official. What was the situation? What kind of power do you think you were using? What were the consequences of your use of this source of power? If you could re-experience this situation, would you do anything differently?

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Now, consider a situation where you felt "powerless." What was it? Why did you feel this way? Who did have the power in that situation? What kind of power source do you think they were using? If you had a chance to re-live that situation, what might you do differently to have more influence?

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Connecting the power competency with good governance

We can do noble acts without ruling earth and sea.

Aristotle, 3rd Century BC Greek Philosopher

Using power in a principled and strategic manner is fundamental to good governance. It is also an important elected leadership competency in relation to others like decision making, policy making, overseeing and negotiating. We will look at the inter-linkage between the various competencies in a moment, but first, a look at the links between using power and the principles of good governance.

❑ **Participation and civic engagement.** Effective leaders make it possible for their citizens to get involved and do good works. To accomplish this, elected leaders empower others to act not by hoarding the power they have but by giving it away. Authentic civic engagement requires local governing bodies to share information and resources. Both are at the heart of using power. To hoard these powers or use them unilaterally encourages the ultimate abuse of power.

❑ **Transparency and accountability.** When the mechanisms are in place to assure transparency and accountability, it is more difficult to be corrupt, to manipulate resources for personal or political gain. On the other hand, corruption practices can become so pervasive and institutionalized that everybody in the organization and community simply acknowledges their existence and operates accordingly.

❑ **Equity and diversity** that assures access to decision-making and the basic necessities of life by all citizens creates a built-in mechanism for assuring openness and accountability. They become the other set of gatekeepers that make misuse of political powers nearly impossible.

❑ **Efficiency** in the delivery of public services is incompatible with abuse of power. Corruption is costly, creating shadowy mechanisms for siphoning off public funds and resources. When efficiency is working as a local government norm of operation, misuse of power involving tangible goods and resources in nearly impossible.

❑ **Subsidiarity,** the delegation of authority and resources to the closest appropriate level within the community for programme and service delivery, while admirable, has the potential to harbour the misuse of power. Deals can be cut between elected officials and local politicians that undercut the intent of subsidiarity. These political shenanigans become more

difficult for unscrupulous officials to use when the other principles of good governance are being implemented effectively.

Using power in an effective and principled manner also creates a synergistic relationship with other elected leadership competencies in this series. As we mentioned earlier, the application of more than one competency can result in the generation of holistic power. Let's look briefly at some of the possibilities.

Mix and match your competencies and power sources

Elected men and women have the opportunity to combine their individual and collective competencies and potential power sources to serve their local governments and communities. For example:

❑ The decision-making competencies of your elected body are increased significantly by using the expert and information powers of your elected colleagues and local government staff.

❑ Policy-making is dependent on the use of legitimate powers to reward those who abide by legislative mandates and to punish those who stray.

❑ The negotiation competency can be more successful when it taps any one of several elected leadership power sources i.e. image, connections, and expertise.

❑ The financing competency is highly dependent on the legitimate powers to reward and punish. For example, enforcing taxes, rewarding high performance employees, collecting fines, and providing incentives for sustainable development within the community.

❑ The overseeing competency is fuelled by information power.

❑ Institution-building is complex and can benefit substantially from catalytic and shared power inputs.

❑ The enabling competency and power sharing are synonyms for effective elected leadership.

❑ The facilitating competency is enhanced by image and expert power by those who use it.

The elected leader's potential to build holistic power bases is dependent on the skilful use of each of the competencies in combination with appropriate sources of individual and collective power.

What about empowerment?

*In our age, independence and the ability to get
things done are often mutually exclusive.*

Robert Dilenschneider

Empowerment has become the mantra for many individuals and institutions that promote decentralization, subsidiarity, and, yes, democracy. These conceptual strategies only work when the devolution of responsibility and resources are married to accountability. At the risk of sounding like cynics, we want to put the term *empowerment* as one way to define the use of power into perspective.

James Lucas in *Balance of Power* defends his use of the term *power-sharing* but finds empowerment flawed. His ranting treatment of empowerment is worth listening to.
According to Lucas, empowerment[49]

- ❑ implies that leaders have some kind of godlike prerogative to "anoint" others for action;
- ❑ says that all power resides in the anointers until they decide or condescend to share some of it with others;
- ❑ completely ignores the barriers and obstacles that may exist within the "empowered." For example, they don't want power; they don't know what to do with it, they're afraid to use it, they'll use it in advance for their own positions; or they'll use it to attack us;
- ❑ is blind to the reality that a huge amount of the power that those who want to empower others with actually exists within those to be "empowered," and
- ❑ leaves no room for its opposite - the real, crucial leadership activity of disempowering the ineffective and unworthy.

While you may not agree with Lucas, he does highlight one of the contradictions of the empowerment movement. The very act of empowering others can make them beholden to those who do the empowering. In this sense, it not only comes across as paternalistic and patronizing but can stunt the growth of opposition when it may be needed most.
In defence of his use of the term *power-sharing,* Lucas says:

- ❑ Power-sharing approximates reality. Everyone brings power to a situation when and where power needs to be shared.
- ❑ Power-sharing implies a fluidity of power, positioning it to be applied when needed.
- ❑ Power-sharing embodies the ideal of mutuality that is often missing in empowerment.

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[49]   Lucas, p.15.

Empowerment is something we do to or for people; power-sharing is something we do with people. Power-sharing is a commitment to dialogue and action, not an act of concession. Empowerment doesn't necessarily foster accountability. Power-sharing comes with accountability built right in. These are subtle but important distinctions to be taken into consideration when you and your elected colleagues think about sharing power. We will return to the concept of sharing power when we explore the *enabling* competency.

Power and gender

I do not wish women to have power over men;
but over themselves.

Mary Wollstonecraft, 18th Century English Author and
Women's Rights Advocate, (1759-1797)

In a world where nearly half of the population is disenfranchised for one reason or another, it would be blatantly wrong to talk about using power as an elected official competency without calling your attention to the importance of gender equality. In many patriarchal societies, the use of power is largely seen as a prerogative of the male species. In societies that strive toward a more enlightened androgynous relationship, the issue of power and how it is used is often a contentious issue. To provide a narrow window of opportunity to better understand how this issue might manifest itself within your elected body, we turn to research by Beth Vanfossen on gender differences in communication.

According to Dr. Vanfossen's research, there are certain gender patterns in communication that take place in formal groups like city council meetings.

❏ Men tend to gain the "floor" more often and to keep it for longer periods of time than women.
❏ Men with expertise tend to talk longer than women with expertise. This is perhaps important when expertise is a source of power.
❏ Men initiate more interaction than women.
❏ Men are more likely than women to interrupt the speaking of others.
❏ Women are more likely to be interrupted than men.
❏ Talking time is related both to gender and organization power. The more powerful spend more time talking than the less powerful.[50]

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[50] Vanfossen, Beth, Gender Differences in Communication, a paper presented to the Women and Expression Conference at Towson University Institute for Teaching and Research on Women, Maryland, USA. 1998

These findings are similar to comments in the UN-HABITAT chapter on Gender and the Involvement of Women in Local Governance about involving Somali women in consultative situations with men. It cautioned that "the ability of women in the Somali context to speak out and voice opinions in certain mixed settings can be difficult."

Whether you agree with these findings may not be as important as thinking about how you and your elected colleagues communicate on issues that involve power and gender. Do these conversations differ when gender is involved? Are women at a disadvantage in communicating during your elected body proceedings? If so, why? What might you and others do to address the issues of gender as they relate to the use of power within your elected body, and more importantly, within your local government as an institution representing all citizens?

Shifting the locus

Women in the City of Montreal, Canada, had a problem. An annual survey revealed that nearly two thirds of the women in the city said they were afraid to walk alone in their area at night. Their fear and the restrictions on their mobility represented a major obstacle in achieving gender equality in the city. Through a consortium of organizations in the city, including the elected governing body, a number of programmes were established to deal with the problem but gaps in security remained. It was important that women have an opportunity to disembark from buses between regular stops.

The metropolitan area's public transit system provided a small grant to a women's group, the Ville de Montreal's Femmes et Ville (Women in Cities), to conduct a pilot project, "Between Two Stops." *(Reward power on the part of the transit authority)* This non-profit group provided administrative support and increased awareness among municipal departments and elected officials about the results of the pilot programme. *(Information power)* They also trained workers from 150 small businesses to be able to respond to women in danger. *(Expert power)*

During the six month pilot project, women's groups mobilized individual women to demonstrate that the project corresponded to actual needs of women within the city. *(Proximity power)* As a result of meetings with the city's governing body and transit authority and a vigorous letter writing campaign, the service was made permanent and extended to cover a larger timeframe in the evening. *(Information power and probably, from some members of the governing body, a bit of coercive power)* The service has been adopted by other cities and the NGO, Women in Cities, promotes the programme as part of its international activities. (*Image and shared power uses*)

Like many women-centred initiatives, this one had the blessing of various public bodies, including the city's governing body. It should be obvious that sharing the governing body's use of various power sources in this situation was not the same as giving it away. In this gender-sensitive policy and programme arena, efforts to involve women from the community expanded the overall power quotient available to the governing body and the city. *(A clear case of catalytic power)*

A reflective opportunity

Take a moment and ponder the role of women in your elected body and how it relates more specifically to the *Using Power* competency. Does the gender of your elected officials make a difference when issues of using power are discussed or, more importantly, when sources of power are used? If so, are there some ways that these two interrelated issues might be addressed within the elected body?

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Now, shift your attention to the community. What role has your governing body performed in mobilizing women to share your leadership responsibilities? And, what power sources do you believe these initiatives unleashed?

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Issues of power and administration

We've been talking mainly about *using power* as it relates to you, your elected body, the community, and your constituents. As an elected leader, this is your primary focus. But, there is another critical relationship to be considered in terms of power and authority. This is your relationship as elected officials with the local government officers and staff, those responsible for administering your local government and its programmes and services. While your power and authority as an elected official comes from the electorate through the ballot box, your ability to deliver the attributes of

power is largely in the hands of those you employ to manage and deliver policies, services, and programmes within your jurisdiction.

Many of the things already said about using power as an elected official also apply to your relationships with the local government's officers and staff. You have legitimate, reward, and coercive power at your disposal, and these should not be dismissed lightly in any superior-subordinate relationship. You also have varying degrees of competencies within your elected body to deliver on the other sources of power we have been exploring. On the other hand, the local government staff male and female members are not without their own power base. Let's take a brief look at some of sources of power they have available.

1. The staff represents knowledge, skills and experience that are difficult to replace.
2. Key staff members have expert knowledge and information about the organization, its operation, and the community that are invaluable to the ongoing implementation of programmes and services.
3. Local government employees are in a unique position to mobilize a network of friends and supporters who can be used to counterbalance elected decisions and actions if the employees think you are being unfair in your use of legislated authority.
4. Those who work for local government have many ways to divert or sabotage the good intentions of council-enacted programmes and services, if they so choose.
5. If all else fails, they can run against you in the next election.

Forging a shared power partnership

The relationship between the elected officials and employees of local government should be seen as an interdependent partnership. You need each other to be successful, and your goals should be largely congruent. This doesn't mean there won't be disagreements or conflicts, but they should be addressed in the spirit of mutual trust and respect. Here are some thoughts on how to keep the power partnership between these two arms of local government fine-tuned and operating effectively.

1. First and foremost, the officers and male and female staff of your local government need to be delegated the authority, responsibilities, and resources to do what you want them to do. And they must be held accountable in the use of these attributes of governance. It is not unusual for elected leaders to put muzzles on their staff. They fail to give them operating authority and the necessary freedom and resources to make day-to-day decisions. Local government's initiative is stifled when the staff has not been given sufficient authority and freedom to perform the duties and responsibilities they have been assigned.

2. Keep the channels of communication open between you and the staff. Try to minimize "surprises" on both sides of this relationship. Hidden agendas have a notorious history of use between legislative and executive branches of governments at all levels in all societies. They are a mean and destructive misuse of power and have no place in the governance process.

3. Be goal-directed with your programmes and services and direct in your relationship with the staff. The staff needs to know "where you're coming from" and what you want done. Nothing undermines the achievement of local governments more than the lack of clear direction and consistency in the way directions are communicated.

4. Recognize that acts of coercion invite acts of resistance and retaliation. They are both attempts to unbalance or re-balance the power relationship, and they rarely work.

5. Always remember that sharing power is not the same as giving it away. Some elected officials seem reluctant to share their power of the public trust and responsibility with others, particularly those who work for them.

Using your power competencies in your legislative-executive relationships can be complicated. In sharing power with your managers and staff, you effectively blur the lines that define your special roles and responsibilities within the democratic self-governing process. It is helpful in these respects to understand the rationale behind the privileges of elected leadership and to use these privileges to meet your governing objectives. It is the objectives you should be committed to, not the privileges of your official office.

Benjamin Disraeli, the famous British politician and author, said, "All power is trust." Mutual trust and actions by both elected officials and staff to maintain trust may be the best use of your legitimate and personal powers in managing the legislative-executive relationship.

> *One of the great challenges of leadership is to develop harmony between service and the power that is necessary for the exercise of leadership.*
>
> **Keshavan Nair, 20th Century Indian Author**

A reflective opportunity

The power relationships between local elected officials and their staff are often difficult to maintain without occasional power shortages and even blackouts. Spend a few moments and reflect on what you and your elected colleagues might do to manage the use of your various legitimate and

personal power sources more effectively. Jot them down and discuss them over a cup of coffee or tea with another elected official or, better yet, one of your most valued local government staff members.

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Some miscellaneous thoughts on power

❑ *Power is often perceived as a top-down phenomenon to be exercised by those in authority when, in reality, power flows in all directions.* This can be a humbling lesson for many who aspire to "positions of power" only to realize that their power resides largely in the capacity of others to believe in them. For elected officials, it is reassuring to know that the potential to share power is everywhere.

❑ *Power relationships are dynamic and subject to constant renegotiation.* As soon as you take office, your source of power is not in the "office" you hold; it's in your ability to maintain trust and connections with those who permit you to use the power of your office effectively.

❑ *The absence of power is often more pervasive within local elected bodies than the use of power.* Sometimes elected bodies tend to be reactive to forces around them when their world cries out for action. Using your power competencies is difficult if you are sitting on them.

❑ *Power voids make individuals and communities vulnerable to their environment.* When those we elect don't elect to lead us, we feel vulnerable and often cheated. Power is a curious commodity. When it's not exercised, its absence is sometimes felt more strongly than its presence.

❑ *Because of this, it may be more effective to fill power vacuums and manage them, than to initiate new power surges.* There's a well known problem-solving approach that says it is more effective to remove the constraints that are keeping the problem from being solved than to reinforce those forces driving for a solution. It may also be true of the use of power.

❑ *Sharing power is not the same as giving it away.* Some hold the belief that power is a zero-sum game. In other words, there's only so much to go around. If I give it to you or lose it to you in a bargaining process, then I don't have it. From this viewpoint I've lost. But power is like love. If you share it with

someone, you haven't lost it. In fact, you probably have more than you started with.

❏ *Sharing power may be your greatest legacy as an elected official.* By sharing power with others in your community, you establish the opportunity for your total efforts to be greater than the sum of individual initiatives. Communities are built and sustained through these mathematical miracles.

Public leadership is the inspiration and mobilisation of others to undertake collective action in pursuit of the public good.

Barbara Crosby, 20th Century American Author and Leadership Specialist

Key points

❏ Viewing politics as power has blinded us to the role of power in politics and hence to the pivotal role of leadership.

❏ Power is the most vulnerable of all elected official competencies to abuse.

❏ Every institution creates its own culture of power. As elected leaders you have a responsibility to mould that culture to reflect the principles of good governance.

❏ Good governance involves using the power competency as an opportunity to enable women, ethnic or racial communities, and the economically disadvantaged to engage in local decision making.

❏ Using power responsibly as an elected official is probably the single most important hallmark of public leadership.

❏ Authority is the legal framework and official source of power available to elected officials. It is their source of legitimate power.

❏ Legitimate powers can be used by elected officials to reward and punish others.

❏ Other sources of elected leadership power include expert power, the power of information and ideas, image power, and all those contacts and connections developed over the years.

❏ Power can and should be shared. Power sources can be combined to create catalytic actions where the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

❏ Holistic power is achieved when the using power competency is combined with other elected leadership competencies.

❑ The power competency when used responsibly is critical to fulfilling many of the values and principles of good governance.

❑ The ability of elected officials to use many of the other competencies in this series is dependent in part on their ability to use power effectively.

❑ Empowerment as a term to describe power sharing needs to be reconsidered.

❑ The basic governance principle of equality is often threatened and abused by the indiscriminate use of legitimate and personal power sources by elected officials and local governments.

❑ It is important for elected officials to recognize the dynamics of power differentials that exist between them and their public employees.

❑ Effective local governments are immersed in power-sharing relationships starting with their own administrative and service staffs and extending deep into the various communities they serve.

❑ The ability to share power freely and responsibly may be the greatest legacy that any elected body can leave in its wake.

Chapter 6:
The Decision-Making Competency

Introduction

*Decisiveness is "biting through" the entirety of
the situation and not nibbling around the edges,
or just pulling off what is loose around the bone.*

**Bob Messing, 20th Century American Author
(The Tao of Management)**

Decision-making sounds very simple. It is a competency we all have in varying degrees of proficiency almost from the day we are born. We all make decisions, individually and collectively, hundreds of times a day. So, what's there to talk about? Plenty! Individuals, groups like elected officials, organizations, even countries, make bad decisions not just some of the time but frequently. It's often difficult to hold those who make bad decisions accountable, particularly if the decision has been through a bunch of legalistic, bureaucratic, and public relations type filters. The decision-making competency may sound simple, but it isn't. In fact, we are struggling just to figure out how to present it in a way that it will be most helpful to you and your elected official colleagues.

Taking our clue from Bob Messing, we will quit nibbling around the edges of this topic and be **decisive!** Here is what you can expect to encounter in this chapter.

1. We will establish the context for decision-making by looking at this competency from the perspective of good governance principles and some of the other competencies.

2. This discussion will be followed by what many call the *rational-empirical* approach to making decisions. This is just a complicated term for the sequence of actions that take us from deciding why we need to make a decision, to gathering relevant information and ideas about the situation, to looking at options and potential consequences, and to making the decision to do something. This decision-making process is important because it brings a bit of scientific rigour to your decision-making competency. In addition, it is a good measuring tool for holding your staff accountable when they provide back-up materials in support of all the issues on which you and your elected colleagues are expected to *make decisions* at your official meetings.

3. We will explore some of the other ways we make decisions, those less-than-rational approaches we often use when we don't have all the information, time, or support we need to decide with total confidence.

4. And, we will look at the pitfalls to effective decision-making. These are the times when the best data and judgements we can muster somehow lead us down the path to really bad decisions. As that venerable sage Aristotle reminds us, *"the more you know, the more you know you don't know."*

Making decisions is a cross-cutting competency

The political process is about making decisions on behalf of those you represent. Decision-making is at the centre of your elected leadership roles and responsibilities. When we think about your *financing, overseeing, institution-building, negotiating,* and *policy-making* competencies, these all are based on making sound and principled decisions. These are the "what" aspects of elected leadership. Every one of these competencies is dependent on elected officials exercising their individual and joint decision-making powers and responsibilities. They represent decisions about:

❑   Allocating scarce financial and other resources;
❑   Holding others accountable;
❑   Building the institutional capacity of your local government to be more responsive and responsible;
❑   Negotiating to get the best deal for your local government and it citizens; and
❑   Most importantly, establishing local laws that define the present and future boundaries of public and private behaviours.

More often than not, fulfilling each of these "what" competencies requires: 1) individual decisions which define your personal choices on specific issues; and 2) group decisions that represent a collective will to act on behalf of your constituents.

The other competencies of *communicating, facilitating, enabling,* and *using power* are associated with the "how" aspects of decision-making. We could also include *negotiating* as one of these competencies as well. Of all these competencies, *using power* may be the competency that is most intertwined with decision-making. Through your elected body's legitimate power sources, the policy-making, financing, and overseeing responsibilities that come with the office of elected leadership, you have a number of decision choices.

James Lucas in *Balance of Power* describes the options you and your elected colleagues have to exercise your legitimate powers. You can:

1.   **Make decisions.** You can make important and constructive decisions based on your legitimate powers or you can make important and destructive decisions. You will also make a lot of decisions that are not particularly important, constructive or destructive, simply because the wheels of local government are greased by a myriad of little decisions of minor consequence that need your official stamp of approval or denial.

2.   **Delegate decisions.** As an elected official, you have opportunities to delegate authority and responsibilities to your local government managers and staff, to community groups, etc.

3.   **Delay decisions.** Often you have the power to wait, to be patient until the circumstances are more favourable. As Lucas reminds us, there is great power in patience and inaction. No decision can be a decision of

considerable consequence, and these decisions can cut both ways as well. In other words, a delayed decision can be both positive and negative in terms of your short- and long-range community goals.

4. **Support decisions.** Just because your local elected body makes a decision doesn't mean it will be implemented. For example, a decision is made to enact a new environmental law, but several months later you learn that nothing has happened to assure its implementation. You may need to make additional decisions before the original decision can be implemented. Elected men and women from local governments also have the power to support the decisions made by others. These could be decisions to support other levels of government or to support various organizations or initiatives within the community.

5. **Veto decisions.** These are the "no" decisions to defeat pending "yes" decisions. Often these choices require considerable courage if the rest of your elected colleagues are strongly committed to their point of view. In some intergovernmental arrangements, it may be possible for a local government to make veto-type decisions on legislation or agreements that cut across political boundaries.

6. **Cancel decisions.** It is not uncommon for local elected bodies to cancel the decisions made by previous elected bodies or to decide that one of their previous decisions needs to be rescinded. This is making decisions to unmake decisions.[51]

We are a bit surprised that Lucas doesn't include the *decision not to decide* category. Often elected officials, for many different reasons, decide that they will not make a decision on a certain issue. This is different from vetoing, delaying, and other options explored above. One could argue that it is part of *making decisions.* However, on many occasions, the decisions not to decide are implicit and not explicit so there is rarely any paper trail to track the decision.

The de bono perspective

Edward De Bono, who on occasion gets carried away by his own admonition to think creatively, provides us with sixteen different ways to make a decision. While many are variations of the six types of decisions outlined above, two caught our collective eyes as being useful to this discussion. They are what he calls a *political decision* and the other *decision or choice.*

Regarding the latter, De Bono says a *decision* and *choice* are different even though the two are often confused. A choice is when we explore various options before making a decision. Of course, one can argue that every time we eliminate a choice or option under consideration, we are making a decision. He relates the story of the donkey that starves to death between two

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[51] De Bono, Edward, Atlas of Management Thinking, (Middlesex, England, Penguin Books, 1981), p. 38.

equally attractive stacks of hay because he can't decide which one to approach. De Bono says the moral is not that we can't decide which is the better choice; rather we can't bear to give up the option that won't be chosen.

De Bono's political decision is slightly different and we suspect one you can relate to in your experience as an elected official. The political decision is one that is seen by others to have been made. The citizens perceive a commitment to action but the decision leads to nothing happening.

> One purpose of a decision is to satisfy the expectations of those eager for a decision. A political decision is real enough but it is designed to leave things in the end exactly as they were in the beginning. It is simply designed to have an effect on those watching. To do nothing in an active and important manner is a rare skill.[52]

Often elected officials make promises they never intend to keep. This is often the situation when individuals are campaigning for election. Most voters are aware that these promises to make decisions if elected may never happen. These aren't really decisions but to many they sound like decisions. These kinds of statements often trap the elected official at some later time. They also tend to destroy public trust when nothing happens. Nevertheless, they are expressions that sound at the time like decisions.

The more serious kinds of political decisions are those that are made without the benefit of analysis and may in fact result from campaign promises made before elections. We've also witnessed political decisions being made that are impossible for the management staff to implement for one reason or another. Decision-making in the political arena is complex, demanding, and fraught with a certain amount of uncertainty. The challenge is to minimize the uncertainty and maximise the impact of the decisions you make as an elected leader.

People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does.

Michel Foucault

Decision-making and good governance

The decision-making competency is very much linked to the principles of good governance espoused by institutions like UN-HABITAT and others. Let's spend a few moments looking at these principles as they relate to decision-making.

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[52] Lucas, James R. Balance of Power, (New York, American Management Association, 1998), pp. 14-5.

- *Participation* or *civic engagement* is at the heart of participatory decision-making. It may represent one of the major breakthroughs in the expected norms of elected leadership worldwide during the latter part of the twentieth century. Of course, norms and actual behaviour are two different things. Nevertheless, the expectation grows that greater participation in public decisions will become an implementing standard in local governments everywhere. We will be addressing how decision-making and civic participation can be optimised in Chapter Eight, the *Enabling* competency.

- *The rule of law* as a guiding principle should never be questioned when making public decisions or private ones for that matter.

- *Transparency and accountability* are principles that are often ignored by local elected officials. Many public decisions can now be wrapped in patriotism, security, and other platitudes because secrecy is required to keep information out of the hands of those who might be plotting against our communities. In many cases, such actions are little more than political excuses to avoid transparency and accountability. Very few public decisions, particularly at the local level, need to be wrapped in secrecy.

- Decision-making should be *responsive,* and we might add *timely.* These are not only good governance principles, but they also represent good management practices.

- *Equity and inclusiveness* may be two of the most difficult governance principles to factor into your decision-making as elected officials. The difficulty may be how to make these principles operational if your local government has a history of denial about their importance. Those decisions that ignore equity for and inclusion of all citizens within your local government often disenfranchise various segments of your community. If the rationale behind the exclusion of certain groups like women or an ethnic minority is cultural, remember that cultures are invented by those who live in them. As such, they are subject to change, based on enlightened decisions by leadership groups like yours.

- *Efficiency and effectiveness* are bottom-line concerns with all major public decisions. Effectiveness is doing the right things, those decisions more associated with policies and long-range planning. Efficiency is doing things right, the decisions more often aligned with the competencies of financing and overseeing.

Decision-making is at the core of being an elected official. Making decisions that adhere to the principles of good governance is at the heart of elected leadership.

A reflective opportunity

Before you move on, it is time to reflect on the many ideas about decision-making that have just been presented. We suggest you take the good governance qualities just discussed and jot down examples of decisions your local elected body has made recently that fit these categories. For example, were there decisions involving issues of *inclusiveness, civic engagement, transparency, efficiency,* or other principles of good governance? If so, make a note of them below.

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   Now, a bit more difficult reflection: Think about decisions your elected body should be making in some of these good governance categories but aren't. Record these below and think about meeting with your elected colleagues to discuss them.

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Gender and decision-making

Speaking of good governance, there are several issues that swirl around the decision-making competency that are gender related. First, is there gender balance in your decision-making body? Probably not. Women are notoriously under-represented on public policy making bodies. Since women make up roughly half the population of your local government, is there any logical reason why they shouldn't be represented accordingly on your local government governing body?

   Second, gender balance could improve your decision-making competencies as a governing body. According to a study by the Council of Europe, "There are strong empirical indications that the inclusion of both sexes in policy-making leads to better policy-making that better fits a diverse citizenry...and gender balance leads to the introduction of forgotten and/or new issues on the policy agenda."[53] Alice Eagly, in a review of research on gender and leadership, makes the observation that "women tended to adopt

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[53] Woodward, Alison, Going for Gender Balance: A Guide for Balancing Decision-Making, (Strasbourg, Division Equality between Women and Men, Directorate of Human Rights, Council of Europe, 2001), p. 9.

a more participative or democratic style, compared with the more directive and autocratic style of men." [54]

Finally, the decisions you make as the governing body of your local government need to be run through a gender filter to: 1) assure that the good governance principles of equity and inclusion are being honoured; and 2) determine the potential impact on women of all ages in your community.

A reflective opportunity

With respect to the three gender-related decision-making criteria just mentioned, take a moment and rate your governing body's performance in each category.

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Based on these ratings, what could you do personally to improve the gender quality of your decision-making capabilities as a governing body?

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The art of making effective decisions

There are not secrets. There is no mystery.
There is only common sense.

Onandaga proverb (One of America's first nations)

Having good intentions and a sound understanding and commitment to the principles of good governance and gender balance aren't enough. It also takes analytical skills, an understanding of information and data and how to organize it, the ability to reason and engage in critical inquiry, and knowing how to use your experience and observations to reach logical and workable conclusions.

In *Smart Choices*, the authors say that an effective decision-making process fulfils six criteria:

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[54] Eagly, Alice, Gender and Leadership: A Review of Pertinent Research (Evanston, Ill. Harmony: Forum of the Symphony Orchestra Institute, April 1998), p. 103.

❑ It focuses on what's important.

❑ It is logical and consistent.

❑ It acknowledges both subjective and objective factors and blends analytical with intuitive thinking.

❑ It requires only as much information and analysis as is necessary to resolve a particular dilemma.

❑ It encourages and guides the gathering of relevant information and informed opinion.

❑ It is straightforward, reliable, easy to use, and flexible.[55]

In order to fulfil these criteria, we are suggesting the following seven-step decision-making process.

1. **Awareness and vision:** It starts out with *problems* and *opportunities*, the primary reasons why any of us make those important decisions. We will link these with awareness and vision, the thought processes that lead us to problems and opportunities. These two sets of decision-making variables are intertwined.

2. **Building decision-making coalitions:** Once you decide to address either a problem or opportunity, it's important to think about who else should be involved in making whatever decisions you and your elected colleagues decide to make and to what extent should they be involved in the decision-making process.

3. **Focusing in on the problem or opportunity:** This sounds simple, but in reality it can be very complex. There is a tendency to want to define symptoms and solutions as problems. Depending on the size of your local government, this phase could be conducted by your local government management and technical staff. Whether you are responsible for just overseeing the staff to assure that adequate data gathering or analysis is conducted or responsible for these tasks, it is important for elected officials to understand how this part of the decision-making process is conducted.

4. **Determining your goal and objectives:** Once you have reasonably defined your problem or opportunity, it's time to think about your goal and objectives in either solving the problem or taking advantage of the opportunity.

5. **Developing options** - the *"how-to-do-it"* **phase:** As decision-makers, you want to know the options available in making a decision. On rare occasions, what you need to do is crystal clear. More often, you are faced with a series of trade-offs that makes decision-making problematic. You need a simple method for sorting through your options as an elected official.

6. **Deciding on a course of action:** Political decision-making is all about making choices and the allocation of scarce resources. You're probably thinking, "Why do we need to go through so many steps to make a decision? Why can't we just make the decision and get on with it?" Well, it's all about consequences.

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[55] Hammond, John, Ralph Keeney, and Howard Raiffa, Smart Choices, (New York. Broadway Books, 1999), p. 4.

7. **Implementation readiness:** Before you hand off your decisions to those who will be responsible for carrying them out, you will need to assure that they have the resources required. You will also need to determine how you will assess the success of the decisions you have made. This is where your decision-making competencies overlap with your *policy-making, financing, institution-building* and *overseeing competencies.*

Step one: Awareness and vision

As we said in the overview of these seven steps in decision-making, awareness and vision often starts with *problems* and *opportunities.* In fact, these two sets of decision-making variables tend to be intertwined. Hopefully, the following discussion will help clarify how they complement each other in the decision-making competency. While identifying problems and opportunities is often seen as the first step in the rational decision-making process, it's your awareness and vision as an elected official that defines your leadership decision-making competencies. Since we are talking about leadership as the defining goal in this set of chapters, we want to start this discussion with the importance of awareness and vision in decision-making.

Awareness and vision is more like an attitude or a mindset, a way of looking at things as an elected official. For example, solving problems begins with the basic *awareness* that something is wrong in the organization or community, or about to be, and needs to be addressed. A *vision,* on the other hand, is about a future state that is an improvement on the current situation.

Both *awareness* and *vision* involve many personal traits and qualities: *insights,* seeing things that are not obvious to others; *perspective,* looking at things from a different point of view; *intuition,* hunches from our collective experiences that dwell somewhere in our sub-consciousness; and, *increasing our peripheral vision,* taking off those blinders to widen our scope. Both of these leadership qualities, *awareness* and *vision* can benefit from *reflection,* one of the reasons why we build reflecting opportunities into this series of learning experiences. Like problems and opportunities, awareness and vision lend themselves to description by contrast. Let's see if we can make more sense out of these two leadership qualities that are so important to decision making.

❑ *Awareness* is seeing "what is." *Vision* is seeing what "can be."
❑ *Awareness* is more tactical, short-term, and specific. Vision is long-term and strategic in its perspective.
❑ *Awareness* looks at the details; *vision* paints the "big picture."
❑ *Awareness* involves convergent thinking or focusing in. *Vision* is at its best when our thoughts diverge from the beaten path.

- *Awareness* often requires hindsight, determining what went wrong and how to fix it. *Vision* operates from foresight, envisioning what's over the horizon and seeing a future that is not yet invented.
- *Awareness* is often intense, involving constant scanning of the environment for clues. *Vision* comes to us best when we transcend our immediate environment.
- *Awareness* is enhanced by our analytical abilities to put two and two together and get four. *Vision* benefits from conceptual thinking, taking two and two and putting them together so they equal multiple digits.

The discussion about awareness and vision also conveys insights into two decision-making patterns, those associated with *reactive* and *proactive* thinking. Proactive decisions are based on future conditions that may not be totally understood. Reactive decisions are based on current and past information and insights. Both are important to the council's effectiveness. As an elected official it is important to understand how your elected body makes decisions. Are you and your colleagues inclined to be more pro-active or reactive in your decision-making processes? The answer is most likely reactive because you have inherited such a backlog of problems from previous elected bodies. Nevertheless, the skills in being proactive as decision-makers are important even when dealing with long-standing problems. Proactivity tends to help you seek out new and innovative solutions.

> *All our knowledge is about the past and our decisions about the future.*
>
> **Anais Nin, 20th Century French born, American Author**

Problems and opportunities

Here are some of the distinctions between these two decision-making challenges:
- *Problems* are often oriented toward maintenance - fix it, solve it, and get on with it. *Opportunities* are focused on something we often call development, be it social, economic, physical, or political.
- *Opportunities* are, nevertheless, problematic. They almost always involve some risk and uncertainty. Is it feasible? Will it work? If it works, will it result in the intended benefits? Will the benefits outweigh the costs? *Problems,* on the other hand, can become more risky and uncertain if they aren't solved.

❑ *Opportunities* live in the future and the risks must be calculated against a future not always predictable. *Problems* emerge from the past, resulting from actions or inactions that have or have not happened or decisions your predecessors made or didn't make. The results of solving problems or not solving them is often more predictable. On the other hand, management specialist Peter Senge reminds us that, " oday's problems come from yesterday's solutions."

❑ *Opportunities* require foresight - a vision about what can be. *Problems,* more often than not, require hindsight - determining what went wrong.

❑ When tapping *opportunities,* the critical question is What if? The most important question when solving problems is Why?

❑ When dealing with problems, we seek solutions. With opportunities, the search is for benefits.

❑ *Opportunities* can be ignored. Problems, in most cases, shouldn't be ignored.

Both vision and awareness are valuable leadership skills. Each requires its own set of tools, and combined, they define our perceptions of reality. They also provide the foundation upon which we make decisions about solving problems and taking advantage of opportunities. Without awareness and vision on the part of elected and appointed men and women, there are few possibilities to build a better future for your local governments and communities. The challenge for elected bodies is to recognize the strengths and qualities of each elected man or woman as a decision-maker and to use each effectively in addressing problems and exploring opportunities.

Opportunities come but do not linger.

Nepali proverb

A reflective opportunity

Take a few moments and think about how you approach your responsibilities as an elected official. Are you more inclined to be problem-oriented or opportunity-oriented? For example, are you generally optimistic about the local government and its ability to cope with community issues, or are you more pessimistic? Should your elected body be more concerned with current problems or future opportunities? Jot down some examples that reflect your answers to these questions.

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      Given your views on these issues, identify several problems or opportunities that your elected body should be addressing in the near future. Seek out one or more of your elected colleagues and discuss your thoughts with them.

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Step two: Building decision-making coalitions

You never plough a field by turning it over in your mind.

Irish proverb

It's never too early to think about expanding your circle of decision-makers to solve problems and seize opportunities at various levels of the local government organization and the larger community. Another way to describe that circle of decision-makers is through the commonly used term, stakeholders. *Stakeholders* in decision-making can involve not just individuals but groups and organizations as well. They can be many citizens, young and old and from different income, ethnic, and cultural communities of your local government. They are those who may be either the cause of an issue, like pollution, or those who suffer the consequences. They are also those who will support your elected body in matters of public policy making, and those who oppose your initiatives. As we said in the chapter on *Using Power,* sharing power is not the same as giving it away. And decision-making is one of your most important power tools as an elected official.

      Decision-making is at the heart of fulfilling your responsibilities in a number of the good governance principles. While you and your elected colleagues have unique authority and responsibility for making decisions on behalf of your citizens, it doesn't deny the importance and opportunities to share decision making with others. In fact, the principles of good governance have decision-sharing written all over them. For example, the process of subsidiarity, equity and inclusiveness, transparency, and civic engagement all suggest the importance of early and sustained involvement of others in your decision-making activities as elected officials.

      The involvement of others in sharing decision-making responsibilities with your elected body and other components of your local

government will, of course, vary from situation to situation. There are decisions that are important to share with your management and technical staff, and others where you will want to involve participants at the grass roots level of your community. Sharing decision-making also involves other units of local government and work with public, private, and non-governmental institutions. There will be circumstances where you will need to consult but not share the responsibilities of making the final decisions. Your municipal charter will be a good reference point for determining when you can share decision-making responsibilities and when not to share. Common sense is another. Before getting into some of the details about building decision-making coalitions, let's look at a situation where municipalities in one African country are doing just that.

Case in point: Dondo, Mozambique:

The 33 municipalities established in Mozambique after the country's independence in the 1990s were obligated under a new national constitution to not only decentralize programmes and services but decision-making as well. The decentralization process looked good on paper but was difficult to put into practice immediately. In Dondo, a city of about 65,000, the elected leaders soon realized they lacked the institutional framework and concrete mechanisms for involving local citizens in decision-making and problem-solving as mandated from central government.

        More importantly, a survey showed that 90 per cent of Dondo's citizens had little or no understanding of their roles and responsibilities under the new democratic decentralization process. It was obvious that joint decision-making initiatives with citizens were impossible under these circumstances. To pave the way for effective decentralization, a training programme was launched for community activists to provide them with the knowledge and skills to conduct civic education programmes. The graduates of this programme conducted visits to one-third of all residents to explain their new roles in local governance. They also carried out a survey of local infrastructure. The results of these surveys were presented at community meetings during which residents and their elected representatives established development committees. These committees were charged with preparing short-term, medium- and long-range development plans, indicating a mix of problem-solving initiatives and visions. These plans were presented to the city council and commitments were made to incorporate them into the overall municipal development plan.

        The process was not without controversy and challenges. There were confrontations between opposing groups at the community level and some municipal officials were not ready to work in such transparent and power-sharing environments. The bureaucratic barriers surrounding the

budget process were particularly troublesome in forging trust and the climate for shared decision-making. Over time, these challenges have been overcome. According to a case study by Hemma Tengler of the North-South Institute for Development Cooperation in Beira, Mozambique,

"The new institutional approach has been successful in changing the mindset that now governs the city. The promotion of dialogue between government and civil society has shown its first results in the change of attitude of government towards community-based initiatives, in the recognition of new community structures and the inclusion of community representation in a consultative process... Dialogue has also caused changes in communities' attitudes and behaviour by mobilizing their own potentials and giving them pride in themselves and their living environment." [56]

Lessons to learn by

There are several lessons to be drawn from this experience.

❑ Collaborative decision-making arrangements between local governments and their communities may need incentives to help them be successful. National legislation mandating such arrangements is one kind of incentive.

❑ If collaborative decision-making between elected officials and the community is to work effectively, it may require capacity-building on both sides of the relationship.

❑ We will talk about the need to collect data and information to support public decision-making initiatives. In Dondo, the citizen surveys became an important factor in creating the climate for change and subsequent decision- making between the elected officials and the community-based development committees.

❑ The process of constructive dialogue is important in fostering and sustaining effective decision-making between leaders at different levels of governance.

❑ Sharing the power of decision-making with citizens is not the same as giving it away.

In accommodating others you accommodate yourself.

Japanese proverb

Decision-Making

It's time to stop for a moment and reflect on the various ways your elected body involves others in the making of decisions. Quickly jot down those individuals, groups, and organizations that your elected body has involved in making official decisions within the past two to three months and why.

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Now, assess the consequences of the shared decision-making process. If the consequences were beneficial, give it a + mark, and give it a - mark if it was not helpful to involve them.

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Equally important, who was left out of the decision-making events that should have been included - women, representatives of an ethnic minority, indigenous peoples, others? Jot these down and record why you think they should have been included.

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Step three: Focusing in on the problem or opportunity

Thinking is preparation for action. People who are afraid of action, increase the preparation.

Otto Fenichel

Making a decision can be easy. Making the right decision is often very difficult. And putting that decision to the ultimate test by turning it into a goal or objective that your elected body wants to implement is sometimes even more difficult. What we want to do now is walk you through a couple of mental exercises that can be beneficial in making good decisions.

The challenge of sorting out problems from *symptoms* and *solutions*

Problems are those things that keep your elected body and your local government from getting from where you are to where you want to be. This suggests that you know where you want to be which is not always the case. Sometimes problems defy identification, let alone solution, because we are not clear about what we want to achieve.

Setting goals or defining end results, what the problem would look like if it were solved, becomes an important task early in the decision-making, problem-solving process. Without knowing where we want to go, it is difficult to determine 1) how we will get there and 2) whether or not we have arrived.

Another difficulty in identifying problems is the tendency for problems to mask themselves as symptoms or even solutions. Symptoms are those visible aspects of a problem that often bring the problem to our attention. Symptoms rarely explain a problem; they are only manifestations of the problem. For example, a headache is a symptom of something else. The problem could be eye strain that, in turn, may be a symptom of something else, a problem within a problem. We could treat the headache, a symptom, but the next time we read, the "problem" returns. Effective problem solvers need to dig beneath the surface where symptoms reside if satisfactory results are to be achieved. Solutions also masquerade as problems.

Consider the following challenge. Your local government management team has asked your elected body for a decision about a problem in one of the operating departments. In their covering memo, they informed you and your elected colleagues that the water department has a problem. They need to install water meters in the central business district. When you asked why water meters are a "problem," your chief administrative officer said water meters would raise revenues, a definition of the "problem that the finance officer obviously liked, and, of course save the scarce resource of water, which warmed the heart of your environmental officer. Given her response, you and your colleagues started to challenge her about the possibility that the real problem might be either a revenue deficiency or a limited water supply. They sounded to you like they could be *symptoms* of some other problem the city was having.

Once the *real problem* was identified, which was an impending shortage of water for the city, water meters were no longer seen as a problem but a solution and not a very effective one based on other options to conserve water. As for raising more revenue as suggested by the CEO, you told her it wasn't at all clear to you that installing meters would result in improving the finances of the city. As you can see by this situation, identifying a solution as the problem often denies the consideration of other solutions. Identifying solutions as your problem may be the biggest trap you set for yourself as a decision-maker. One way to be a more effective decision maker when it comes to solving problems is to be clear about the difference between *problems, symptoms,* and *solutions.*

The problem dialogue

One way to make better decisions when the decisions involve problems is to ask your problem a series of simple questions. This dialogue with your problem is perhaps the easiest way to understand whether you have a problem and whether or not you want to do something about it. Sometimes the best solution is not to solve the problem.

Here are some questions to ask your problem:

❑ **What is the problem, the real problem?** Don't be fooled by symptoms and solutions that go around dressed like problems.

❑ **Why is it a problem?** Or, *what is causing the problem?* Some street maintenance departments spend a lot of time fixing potholes and never stop to ask why the potholes are there in the first place. If they did, they would probably do something different like fix the problem that is allowing the potholes to re-invent themselves so often. The *Why?* question is one worth repeating over and over until you get to the bottom of the problem.

❑ **Why should the problem be solved?** If this question can't be answered, you may not have a problem worth pursuing.

❑ **When and where is it a problem?** The questions help you pinpoint the source or sources of the problem. Let's go back to potholes again. If they develop in a low-lying area of town, you may find the potholes are *caused* -that "why" answer - by poor drainage. Fix the drainage *problem* and maybe the pothole *symptom* will go away.

❑ **Whose problem is it?** This is just one of several who questions you need to ask. For example, who else would be interested in solving the problem? Would they be willing to contribute to its solution? Who might be opposed to solving the problem? Odd question to ask, but it might reveal some keener insight about what to do about the problem. This question also relates to the possibility of sharing the decision-making responsibilities with others.

❑ **What really is the problem and why?** It is important to continue to come back to this fundamental question even though you thought you had the answers earlier.

❑ **What would happen if we didn't solve the problem?** How many times has your elected body been so perplexed by a problem that you simply ignored it slowly went away? Sometimes the best solution to a problem is no solution.

These questions will trigger a flow of information that will help your elected body and management staff better understand the complexity of the problem. They will also begin to suggest alternatives for solution. For

example, questions about whose problem it is and what their commitment is to solve it may begin to tell you that the time is not right to spend your energies trying to solve the problem at this time. Just because a problem exists doesn't mean those involved are willing to do anything about it.

Solving the problem may require a redefinition of both the problem and those who can help bring about a solution. As mentioned earlier, identifying the problem can be the most difficult step in the decision-making or problem-solving process.

A reflective opportunity

Think about a problem your elected body is currently having difficulty solving. Go back to the problem-finding dialogue set of questions and work your way through it mentally. Jot down some of the reasons why you have been having difficulties with this particular "problem. Or is it a symptom or a solution?

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Deciding what to do with your "found" problem

Before you go any further on this problem-solving venture, you need to decide whether or not an attempt should be made to solve the problem and how soon. Finding answers to the following questions can help you reach a "go or no go" decision.

❑ **How *urgent* is it to find a solution to your problem?** A problem is urgent if it requires immediate attention to avert a crisis.

❑ **How *important* is it to find a solution to the problem?** A problem is important if neglecting it could result in serious consequences for the future of the city department, for example, that is confronted with the problem.

❑ **How *feasible* is it to solve the problem?** Some problems can't be solved with existing levels of technology. Or they may require a financial investment that far exceeds the capabilities of your local government.

❑ **Is it within your local government's** *control t*o **solve the problem?** The cause of the problem may be outside the legal jurisdiction or political influence of your local government. Or the solution may depend on the approval of bodies that have little interest in solving the problem or perhaps have an interest in preventing your local government from solving it.

❑ **Is your local government** *willing to make a commitment* **to solve the problem?** Problems often become problems because previously elected officials have neglected to take actions that would have prevented the problems. Nevertheless, is your elected body now willing to take the action required and to follow through?

For example, if you have a major leak in the city's largest reservoir in the midst of a drought, it's urgent. If the city engineer conducts a study and finds that the reservoir will not be sufficient to meet the city's water needs within the next five years, it's important. If her report also states that the city can recoup the cost of improvements through reasonable rate increases, it's feasible. If the city owns the reservoir it should be able to control the construction process. Is the city governing body willing to make the commitment? Well, that all depends…

Effective elected leadership not only involves making decisions and solving problems, but it also requires a proactive stance by every elected official to search out and seize upon *opportunities* both within the local government and the community. Problem- solving by its very nature is reactive. The local government has a problem and reacts to solve it. Opportunities require a proactive style reaching out for a course of action that is important but not urgent. Problems are urgent, or they would not be seen as problems. On the other hand, they are not always important.

The dialogue we encouraged you to hold with your problem can be equally effective in determining if the opportunity you and your elected colleagues see has a chance to succeed and meet your expectations. It might help to use the future tense to frame your opportunity-seeking inquiries. For example, *why should we take advantage of this potential opportunity for our local government?*

The optimistic elected official sees an opportunity in every problem while the pessimistic elected official when presented with an opportunity sees only problems in trying to take advantage of it. The Romanians during the reign of Nicolae Ceausescu had a joke about these differences. The pessimist was reported to say, "Things couldn't possibly get worse," to which the optimist replied, "Oh yes, my friend, they could get *much* worse." Sometimes the difference between a problem and an opportunity is only a state of mind.

Step four: Determining your goals and objectives

If solving the problem or taking advantage of your opportunity is *urgent, important, feasible, within your local government's control*, and something your elected body is *committed to accomplishing,* then you need to move to the next decision-making stage of this process. This means determining what your goal or objectives will be and carrying out more analysis that will help you determine your possible options.

We are using the terms *goals* and *objectives* because there are times when these two terms are used interchangeably causing unnecessary confusion. We like to think of the goal as being the summation of a set of objectives. In other words, it is the global objective, less specific, less measurable, etc. For example: *My **goal** is to be the best elected official this city has ever known.* In order to achieve this goal, I know that I will need to achieve many objectives along the way. Therefore, my *immediate **objective** is to learn how to write objective statements that adhere to the structure and criteria set forth in this chapter before I go to bed this evening.*

In other words, an objective is a statement of what you want to achieve by some specific date. There are also some other criteria that are involved, but we will speak of those in a moment. Another way to look at this concept is to view a problem or opportunity as two split halves with a gap in between. One half is where we are now; the other is where we want to be. The problem or opportunity is the discrepancy between the two. Effective decision-making and problem-solving is the art of closing that discrepancy:

Defining objectives and putting them into descriptive words that clearly state what you want to accomplish may be the most difficult, certainly the dullest, part of the problem-solving process. It requires a kind of discipline that some of the other steps do not. Despite being a dull and difficult task, it is crucial to effective decision-making. I*f you don't know where you want to go, it is impossible to decide how you will get there or whether you are really where you thought you wanted to be when you arrive.*

To state it somewhat differently, *an objective is a statement of the outcome you want to accomplish.* Here are some criteria that will help you define your objective. A well-stated objective.

❑ *Is specific.* It states what is to be accomplished in the shortest possible terms.

❑ *States an end result,* not an activity.

❑ *Is something the individual, group, organization wants to do;* otherwise, it will have a tendency to slip away.

❑ *Is measurable.* We must be able to know when we reach it and be able to determine our progress toward it. Can we time it, count it, measure it, and complete it?

❑ *Has a target completion date.* The absence of a date by which the objective is to be met is a license to ignore it.

❑ *Is attainable within the time available.*

❑   *Is largely within our control.* Without some control, it is difficult to assure the objective will be accomplished. While it is recognized that many things about any objective may be outside of your control, it is important to minimize outside influence or interference.

The real problem in establishing objectives is to state them so we can determine whether we are making progress to achieve them. Many objectives tend to be vague and *"fuzzy."*

As you write those objectives, ask yourself if they are:

❑   Measurable
❑   Specific
❑   Result-oriented
❑   Realistic and attainable
❑   Time bound

And, just to keep yourself honest around your objective writing tasks, we suggest two more questions.

1)   *How will I know if I have been successful in achieving my objectives?*
2)   *Will it make any difference in the governance and management of our local government?* These are the **accountability** standards against which all objectives should be measured by your governing body.

> *When a man does not know what harbour he is making for, no wind is the right wind.*
>
> **Seneca, 1st Century Roman Stateman-Philosopher**

Step five: Developing options

Once you have defined where you want to go by stating your objective, it is time to analyze the forces surrounding the objective and the changes you want to accomplish by achieving your objective(s). This is the analytical part of deciding how best to get from where you are to where you want to be. There are many tools for analyzing the fields that stand between the current problem you want to solve and solving it or between the opportunity imagined and its realization. In an effort to keep this step somewhat brief, we will confine our options to force field analysis. It's a relatively old method of problem analyses but simple and effective.

Force field analysis assesses the forces in the environment that will have an impact on your efforts to solve problems and seize opportunities. The forces are of two kinds: *driving forces,* those that push us towards our objectives; and *restraining forces,* those that stand in the way as obstacles.

The point of equilibrium between these two opposing sets of forces is the current state of affairs, i.e., problem identified but not solved. While the current state is held in tension by the opposing forces, it is quite susceptible to shifting one way or another. For example, the problem might be solved given certain decisions and resulting actions, or it could get worse!

We achieve our objective, e.g., problem solved or opportunity seized, by unbalancing these forces. This causes the equilibrium to shift either in the direction of the objective or in the opposite direction indicating slippage. Driving forces are the things your local government has working for it to achieve your objectives. The restraining forces are those obstacles that stand in your way. As decision-makers, you and your elected colleagues need to determine how to unbalance the forces and shift the equilibrium in the desired direction. Three processes are involved:

❑ **Diagnosis:** Identify the major forces, driving and restraining, that are helping to maintain the current level of activity.

❑ **Unfreezing:** Changing the different strengths of the individual forces, both pro and con.

❑ **Redefining:** Re-freezing the situation at a new, desired level of achievement-based on intended results.

There are three basic decision-making strategies for bringing about change to achieve your objectives. You can:

❑ **Add to the driving forces.** This generally is less desirable since adding driving forces usually results in more opposing forces, which increases tension.

❑ **Remove or reduce restraining forces.** This is usually more desirable and less obvious.

❑ **Add driving forces and eliminate or reduce restraining forces.** This is probably the most frequently used strategy.

Guidelines for using force field analysis

Not all forces are easy to influence or change. Some are so rigid they are almost impossible to move. The following questions will help you decide on the factors to be given more attention and time in the problem-solving process.

❑ Which of the forces should you dismiss as being impossible to change?

❑ Which of the forces are most vulnerable to change?

❑ Which of those are also more important?

Once the forces have been identified as significant and vulnerable to change, consider which ones you want to attempt to change. In this process, we suggest an additional conduct of inquiry.

❑ Who has access to or influence over the force you want to change?

❑ Which force, if you change it, will trigger other forces? For example, influencing a key leader may automatically influence his or her followers.

❑ What are the resources you have available or can mobilize to bring about the desired change?

❑ Where do we have the most leverage to influence the forces?

❑ What pockets of new resistance can be expected to develop as you begin to strengthen or diminish other forces? How can they be countered?

❑ Who needs to be involved or informed to either lessen the resistance to change or to provide support for the change?

These questions reinforce the importance of forging shared decision-making coalitions as described in Step Two. They point to the importance of reaching out and involving others in some aspect of your decision-making responsibilities as elected men and women. This doesn't suggest you abdicate your legislated authorities and responsibilities. It does mean that your success as an elected body depends on gaining the commitment and ownership of others to help you do what needs to be done to improve your communities.

It's not so much that we're afraid of change, it's that place in between we fear...It's like being between trapezes. There's nothing to hold on to.

Marilyn Ferguson, 20th Century American Author-Philosopher

Step six: Deciding on a course of action

The analysis stage of your decision-making, problem-solving, opportunity-seizing process should provide you with emerging options. Options, by their very nature, require more decision-making. Here are some thoughts on sorting through those options.

Because you operate in the public arena, there are many potential consequences to the decisions you make. They can be positive, negative, or a rich mix of the two. It's important to think about both sets of consequences when moving toward a final decision. Consequences also can be short-term and long-term. Again, these are important to consider. Finally, consequences

fall into the following categories: economic, social, environmental, cultural, and political. Fortunately, not all decisions have all these consequences, or we would be hard-pressed to get any decisions made in the public service.

In an environment of scarce resources, it is important to consider what economists call the "opportunity costs" of your decisions. Implicit in every decision to expend scarce resources on a particular activity or facility is a decision <u>not</u> to use those same resources to address some other problem. For example, what are the opportunity costs if your local government decides to spend scarce funds on a heart transplant centre at the university hospital rather than an AIDS prevention educational programme? Another way to think about these decisions is in terms of their long-term costs and potential benefits. The benefit and substantial costs of saving a few lives through heart transplants must be weighed against other programmes that may preserve life for many at a small investment per capita. In other words, what are the opportunity costs of your funding decisions?

The challenge is to explore the potential consequences of your options with enough precision to make a good choice but not so much that it bogs you down. Looking for consequences requires you to mentally put yourself into the future looking back on each option. This will test your ability to use both the awareness and vision lens of your decision-making glasses.

Most important public decisions have conflicting objectives, e.g., you can't cut taxes and improve services. Given this, you and your elected colleagues need to think about the tradeoffs involved in the options you have on the table. If we go with Option A, what will we be gaining and giving up? And, how do these tradeoffs compare with those we will experience if we go with Option B? Decisions with multiple objectives cannot be resolved by focusing on only one of the objectives. More often than not, you are obliged for political and other reasons to seek a satisfactory solution, *to not let the "best" become the enemy of the good.*

Herbert Simon, who has written extensively about decision-making in public settings, calls this the *"satisficing"* solution. As Simon says, it is impossible to:

❑ know all the options that are potentially available in any complex situation;

❑ foretell future consequences accurately although we must try to foresee the consequences of our decisions to the extent we can; and

❑ place a value on events that have not yet occurred.

Given these realities, all decision-making is imperfect and subject to limits of rationality.

Recognizing the need to engage in *"satisficing"* decision-making, it is important to resist the pressures that often force us to take the first available satisfactory solution to a problem. Finding new options to old problems is how the future gets invented.

A reflective opportunity

We want you to exercise your imagination for a moment or two and think about something important for your community that falls into the "inventing the future" category. Identify some project or programme that takes your community far beyond the *satisficing* solution. Describe it in the following space.

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List all the reasons why it will never happen, all the "we can't do it because" statements. (You will probably need much more space than this so grab an extra piece of paper.)

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Put a plus (+) sign next to those statements that are **really** true. For example, there's a law against it, it's unethical, or it goes against all the laws of physics.

Put a minus (-) sign next to all those statements that are not true, or may be true but can be challenged.

Finally, put a check (✔) next to those assumptions you think you could challenge successfully in planning and implementing your project or programme. Be bold!

Behind every barrier is an opportunity. For those limiting assumptions you put a check mark next to, list one or more ways you could remove it, jump over it, or skate around it. Think outside the box to turn the problem limitations into opportunities. Remember, building coalitions is part of decision-making and problem-solving.

Thinking outside the box, here is my plan for making it happen.

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This reflecting opportunity has been partially taken from *The Leadership Challenge* Workbook. James Kouzes and Barry Posner are the authors and the publisher is Jossey-Bass.

Every beginning is a consequence. Every
beginning ends something.

Paul Valery

Step seven: Implementation readiness

Unfortunately, the decision-making process doesn't end with making decisions. You also want to be assured that your decisions will become effective actions. Two dimensions are relevant in assessing the potential effectiveness of your decision. These are (a) the quality of the decision, and (b) its acceptance by those who either have to execute it or will be affected by it. Both of these will have an impact on the final outcome, which also needs to be considered as you move towards a final decision. The quality of the decision will depend on a number of factors. These factors could include, for example:

- ❏ **Goal focus:** Will the decision we made or the options we decided upon achieve the goal or solve the problem to our satisfaction?
- ❏ **Resource availability:** Do we have the resources to carry out the decision?
- ❏ **Timing:** Is the timing right? In government or politics, timing can be everything.
- ❏ **Feasibility:** Is the decision feasible to implement? Sometimes we have all the other criteria secured, but when it comes right down to it, the decision isn't feasible from an implementation point of view.
- ❏ **Adequacy:** Is the decision adequate to achieve your goal or solve the problem? For example, you have just had two flat tyres on a lorry that is carrying a load of perishable goods to market. You decide to send your co-worker off immediately to get one of the tyres repaired. It's feasible, the timing is right, presumably there are resources to fix the tyre, but the decision certainly isn't adequate given the fact that you have two flat tyres. There may be other criteria that will help you determine whether or not the quality of your decision is satisfactory. It depends on what your decision is about. Don't hesitate to tailor the decision criteria to meet your needs.
- ❏ Acceptance: Will the decision be acceptable to those who (a) are responsible for its implementation, and (b) those who must live with its consequences? Involving both of these stakeholders in the decision-making process is important. It not only helps them better understand the decision, and perhaps contribute to it, but to also be committed to support it.

To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.

Anatole France

Group decision-making options

As elected officials, you probably make the majority of your most important decisions as a member of the elected body. Many years ago, behavioural scientists conducted research on interpersonal relationships and group behaviour by watching, recording, and analyzing these interactions. Their findings on group decision-making are particularly germane to this discussion. Based on this research, Edgar Schein describes the following ways that groups make decisions.

Decision by formal authority or self-authorization: This type of decision-making is central to your roles and responsibilities as an elected official. It is the power of decision- making that is vested in your office as an elected representative of the citizens of the diverse communities of your jurisdiction.

Decision by minority: Have you ever felt coerced into silently supporting a decision by someone else? It happens frequently when individuals get together to make decisions. "Does anyone object? Okay, let's go ahead." or similar comments by the person in charge, or even a self-appointed leader, often obligates you to a decision to which few have a commitment.

Decision by majority rule: This involves voting and/or polling of those who have the authority to vote. This is the common method of decision-making by most legislative groups around the world. The problem with this accepted and efficient way of coming to a decision is the fact that it often divides the group and leaves those who are in the minority uncommitted to the decision.

Decision by lack of response: This is when someone suggests an idea and nobody responds to it. By not responding, the group has made a decision not to support the idea or the contributor. When is the last time this happened to one of your contributions at a meeting?

Decision by consensus. While making decisions by consensus can be time consuming, it is one of the most effective ways to make decisions because it builds commitment into implementing the decision. When the Europeans who were exploring the North American continent in the 17th century came across the Algonquin Indians in what is now Canada, they were puzzled by the tribe's political norms. They saw no visible means of leadership or government within this community. The Algonquins simply had a different concept of authority and relied upon such processes as consensus-building and facilitative leadership to "govern" community life.

Consensus is a process where communication is sufficiently open and supportive to make everyone feel they have an opportunity to influence the decision. Consensus is not the same as unanimity. There may still be differences of opinion, but these differences have been heard, and those who hold them are prepared to support the decision. See the *Facilitating* chapter for more on consensus and the *Communicating* chapter on the art of dialoguing, a valuable consensus-building skill.

Decision by unanimous consent. In this case, everyone agrees on the course of action to be taken.[57] Sounds good but here is a word of caution about coming to a quick unanimous decision. Group decision-makers are sometimes the victims of something called "groupthink." Groupthink is the mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action. City councils can sometimes fall into the groupthink trap when they begin to emphasize group cohesiveness at the expense of independent critical thinking.

Some final thoughts about decisions and decision-making

This discussion has taken us deeper and wider than we had initially imagined. Decision- making is complex in any environment but particularly when it involves local governments' elected officials. Since one of your primary and most important roles as elected officials is policy-making and policy-making is all about making decisions, we will continue looking at this fascinating competency from a slightly different perspective in the chapter on policy-making. But first we'll hear from Peter Drucker, a world treasure when it comes to telling us what we should know about things like decision-making. According to Drucker,

> A decision is a judgment. It is a choice between alternatives. It is rarely a choice between right and wrong. It is at best a choice between 'almost right' and "almost wrong" - but much more often a choice between two courses of action neither of which is provably more nearly right than the other."[58]

Perhaps because decisions are largely judgements made by mere mortals, Drucker emphasizes the importance of hearing dissenting points of view. He lists three reasons why dissent is needed.

❑ First, it safeguards the decision-makers against becoming prisoners of the institution. Everybody wants something from the decision-makers, and this is particularly true of public decision-makers. As he counsels, "the only way to break out of the prison of special pleading and preconceived notions is to make sure of argued, documented, thought-through disagreements."[59]

[57]   Schein, Edgar H., Process Consultation, Volume One. (Reading, MA., Addison-Wesley, 1988), pp.69-74.
[58]   Drucker, Peter, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices. (New York, Harper and Row, 1973), p. 470.
[59]   Drucker, p. 473.

❑ Second, "disagreement alone can provide alternatives to a decision. And a decision without an alternative is a desperate gambler's throw, no matter how carefully thought out it might be."[60]

❑ Finally, "disagreement is needed to stimulate the imagination. One may not need imagination to find the *one right* solution to a problem. But then this is of value only in mathematics. In all matters of true uncertainty such as the executive deals with - whether his sphere is political, economic or military - one needs…imagination - a new and different way of perceiving and understanding." [61]

The effective decision-maker, therefore, organizes dissent. And, dissent converts the plausible into the right and the right into the good decision. Encourage dissent. Better yet, seek it out.

Be brave to ask so as to learn.

Japanese proverb

A reflective opportunity

Take a few moments and review all the concepts, principles and strategies that we have presented on decision-making. What is the most important thing you have learned that will help you in your own decision-making responsibilities?

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What was the biggest surprise?

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What do you plan to do to become a more effective decision maker?

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[60] Drucker, p. 473.
[61] Drucker, p.473.

Key points

- ❏ Decision-making is a cross-cutting competency affecting just about everything elected leaders do.
- ❏ Elected men and women can exercise their legitimate decision-making powers by making, delegating, delaying, supporting, vetoing, and even cancelling decisions.
- ❏ The elected officials' decision-making competency is linked to good governance principles and is critical in assuring the implementation of these principles by local governments.
- ❏ Rational decision-making is useful but also problematic when misused.
- ❏ Effective decision making includes seven steps, at least in this chapter: *awareness and vision; building decision-making coalitions; focusing in on the problem or opportunity; determining your goal and objectives; developing options - the "how-to-do-it" phase; deciding on a course of action; and implementation readiness.*
- ❏ The problem dialogue tool may be the elected officials' best friend when trying to understand problems and opportunities
- ❏ Final decisions should fulfil the following criteria: urgency, importance, feasibility, control, and commitment.
- ❏ Objectives resulting from decision-making should be measurable, specific, results-oriented, realistic and attainable, and time-bound.
- ❏ Force field analysis is an effective decision-making tool.
- ❏ Satisficing decisions are those made under less than ideal conditions.
- ❏ Decisions should be judged by their quality and acceptance by those who have to live by their consequences.
- ❏ Group decisions are either made by formal authority, lack of response, the minority or majority, consensus, or unanimous consent.
- ❏ It is important for decision-makers to seek out and listen to dissenting opinions before making their final decision.
- ❏ No choice is always a choice.

Between the idea and the reality falls the shadow.

T.S. Eliot, 20th Century American born British Poet

It's called a decision. And when it's an enlightened decision, the shadow disappears.

Chapter 7:
The Policy-Making
Competency

Introduction

What we think or what we believe in is, in the end, of little consequence. The only thing of consequence is what we do.

John Ruskin, 19th Century English Essayist

> The word policy gets confused with **politics** in some parts of the world. It may be the way the term gets translated into other languages. Nevertheless, it has been a problem for this series and for how this particular competency is sometimes interpreted. Policy-making can be politically motivated, but it's not politics. For some reason, actually for many reasons, "politics" has a bad reputation, and even some elected officials don't like to think they are in **politics** or worse yet that they are "politicians." So, we have been advised to clarify this confusion. Since we will go to some lengths to define what we mean by policy, it's only fair that we define politics before we move on. As one cynic said, "Politics is the art of getting votes from the poor and money from the rich by promising to protect each from the other." We welcome you, of course, to add your own interpretations. Now, about policy making...

You as an elected official have a unique policy-making *role* and *responsibility.* However, the *competency* for making policies is shared with many who don't wear the mantle of elected leadership and often not shared by those who can help you in your policy-making role. We will explain these somewhat confusing and seemingly contradictory comments in a moment.

Your policy-making role as an elected official is perhaps your most important role and responsibility. Your success in helping to forge innovative and effective policies for your local government and its citizens will define your leadership and your legacy as an elected official. However, there are at least three things that make this a formidable challenge.

- ❑ First, *policy* means so many things to so many people that this legislated right and responsibility, although uniquely yours as an elected official of your defined jurisdiction, gets sullied in the process.
- ❑ Second, everyone seems to make policy, sometimes on your behalf. We will talk about this dilemma in a moment.
- ❑ Lastly, your unique role and responsibility to make policies and legislate the means for their implementation and enforcement is diminished greatly if you don't engage others in their creation, development, and implementation. What is legally your obligation as elected representatives i.e. making public policies, is in reality a shared responsibility.

David Chrislip and Carl Larson address this dilemma in their book on Collaborative Leadership. They say:

> Our role as citizens is to elect representatives to frame public policy issues, to argue the merits of alternative approaches, and to make decisions for us. The people we elect should reflect our diversity and represent our perspectives, interests, and opinions in shaping public policies. Among other things, this understanding of a large role for elected officials and a limited role for citizens in public policy making has led to the failure to address difficult issues of shared concern. Our 'representatives' and the governmental institutions they oversee have failed: first, they have failed to solve problems directly affecting citizens in communities; second, they have failed to prevent the growing division between haves and have-nots, and between racial, cultural, and gender groups; and third, they have failed to engage citizens in the problems of society, even though many of us are both part of the problem and necessary for the solution.[62]

It's a rather sobering and damning statement about representative governance and its ability to deliver on key policy issues, at least from the perspective of these two authors. If you read their concerns more carefully, you realize they are putting much of the blame for these failures on us, the citizens of your communities. We have taken the liberty to underscore their point about your role in public policy making being large and the role of citizens being limited. In that assumption, which seems entirely logical since elected officials have that responsibility, is the challenge we will try to untangle in this discussion. It cuts to the heart of the *Policy-Making* Competency.

What we plan to cover in this chapter

Before we go any further, let's take a look at what we will be discussing in the rest of this chapter. We will try to sort out the many meanings of policy, or more accurately, all the decision-making events that are often referred to as "policies". This will be followed by a discussion of who makes policies in local governments. This is always a bit surprising to us since there is the implicit assumption that only policy-makers make policies.

Given the fact that policies seem to flow out of every crack in the local governance structure, we will look at the differences among administrative, managerial, and governance-type policies. We will also try to bring a bit of light to how one goes about writing an actual policy statement and provide a few criteria to be considered in putting policies down on paper.

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[62] Chrislip, David D. and Carl E. Larson, Collaborative Leadership (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), pp. 26-7.

We will put policy into a somewhat logical flow of events, starting with goals and completing the cycle with implementation and impact evaluation and complete the discussion by exploring policy dialogue opportunities.

A reflective opportunity

It's time to stop and reflect a bit about what Chrislip and Larson are saying. Do you agree or disagree with their assessment, and why?

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If you agree, what can be done about it from your perspective as one of the representative policy-makers in your local government? If you disagree, step out of your role as elected official and into the role of a single mother in a high security risk, low-income part of your community who is struggling to provide safety and other basic needs for her family, and respond from what you think might be her perspective.

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While policy-making is a shared leadership responsibility, elected officials must lead the challenge. Your policy-making skills are only as good as your ability to combine them with some of the other competencies in this series, namely *using power, enabling, decision-making, negotiating, facilitating,* and *communicating.* Policy-making is also the core competency that helps you and your elected colleagues secure the good governance principles and practices that we have stressed throughout these learning materials. Principles like inclusion, openness, transparency, accountability, participation and others must be anchored in public policies, or they have little chance of being taken seriously by either your local governance system or the people of the many communities you represent. Fortunately, international institutions like UN-HABITAT have made significant contributions to our understanding of these principles and how they can be implemented at the local levels of governance.

Just what do we mean by *policy*?

> *All important distinctions are unclear.*
>
> **Kenneth Boulding, 20th Century American Scientist**

We happen to agree with Kenneth Boulding, particularly when it comes to defining policy. The important distinctions are unclear. After all, *policy* is a word with many meanings. It can be (a) a philosophical or ideological stance; (b) a plan, an expression of future direction; (c) a definition of current action; (d) specific proposals; (e) a way of announcing decisions of government; (f) formal authorisation; (g) a negotiated position between two or more parties; (h) a statement of intent; or (i) an unintended, unannounced reality that was never decided formally by anyone including those who are considered to have "the policy-making" role.

Bryson and Crosby acknowledge this confusion of terminology in their book, *Leadership for the Common Good*. "We use the word policy as a generic shorthand for policies, plans, programmes, projects, budgets, and procedures - that is, for all the concepts and activities that are used to resolve problems".[63]

Later in their book, they give us a more refined definition. *Public policies are substantive decisions, commitments, and actions made by those who hold or affect government positions of authority, as they are interpreted by various stakeholders.*[64] In other words, public policy is what those affected by it think it is, which might be very different from what the policy-makers intended. Others think that public policies are those legal ordinances or documents that local elected bodies vote on that become part of their government's permanent archives. These documents are not quite part of the municipal charter but more than a plan to increase garbage collection fees.

There is also the impression or expectation that policies result from a very deliberate process of decision-making on the part of policy bodies and are based on thorough analysis of all the conditions surrounding an issue under consideration and the various alternatives available to improve upon it. In reality, the policy process is very messy. Sometimes it really does happen as suggested in the statement just made. Other times it evolves out of negotiations with several parties, for example, as *conditions precedent* in a donor-assisted loan agreement for a new water plant.

Policies are also made or reaffirmed at budget time when elected officials allocate resources for the new fiscal year. Policies can also evolve out of unintentional situations. For example, the local government is operating with a very tight budget and ignores preventative and routine maintenance of equipment and other fixed resources. After a couple years of ignoring the maintenance responsibility, the staff decides not to include it in future

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[63] Bryson, John M. and Barbara C. Crosby, Leadership for the Common Good, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishing, 1992), p.57.
[64] Bryson and Crosby, p.63.

budget requests. Thus, the elected body has adopted a non-maintenance policy by default.

Given all these possibilities, the potential for your lasting influence, indeed your legacy, as a policy-maker can be greatly diminished. We want to help you learn how to escape the dilemma of policies being everything and nothing. While policies represent your most powerful lever for exercising elected leadership, you need to get a handle on it to succeed.

To summarise, policies show intent, declare stands on difficult issues, formalise visions, describe required actions, announce decisions, clarify relationships, and more. Policies are useful and necessary to assure good governance.

Who makes policy?

In reality, policies are made by all organizations whether they are public, private, non-governmental, or a mix of these. All levels of governments make policies, and often their policies are contradictory. So, when local governments make policies, they need to be aware that other levels of government or governments on their same level are also making policies that might not be compatible.

Sometimes policies are formulated by "street-level bureaucrats" who, by their actions or inactions, define local government policy on a particular programme or service. Local elected bodies might enact a "policy" defining a specific level of service to be provided in the community, but it never gets implemented quite the way it was intended. In this case, who has really made the policy? As you can see, the policy-making process can be a bit complicated and not always under the control of those who assume they have the "policy making" role. This raises an interesting point. If a policy is not implemented as intended, is it a policy?

As elected officials, you are the policy-makers for your community. And your local government managers and staff are expected to implement them. Few would quarrel with this truism. And yet, it seems that policies, albeit informal, are frequently made by a variety of individuals, groups, or circumstances operating outside the deliberations of the council. While it can be discouraging to see the cornerstone of your power and authority chipped away by a myriad of other forces, some experts say you are your own worst enemy when it comes to making policies that make a difference.

For example, the local government staff doesn't always implement your policies in the way you intended them to be implemented. They are, in effect, "rewriting" your policy by their contrary actions or inactions. There may be a variety of reasons for these kinds of policy disconnects. Your staff may not be sympathetic to the policy perhaps because they feel they didn't have an opportunity to provide their input to the policy before it was enacted.

They may not have the knowledge and skills to implement it but are reluctant to acknowledge that this is the problem. Or more importantly, they may not have the resources to carry out your policy. Sometimes public administrators are given mandates but not the corresponding resources to carry them out.

More importantly, there are times when the community doesn't appreciate your policy- making efforts. Some feel they were "blind-sided" by not being consulted. Others think your policies cater to special interests or, in other words, not their special interests. The policy is great but too far ahead of its time. Or it's infused with so many competing values that conflict is inevitable if the policy is implemented.

Leadership in the policy arena may be one of the most difficult and challenging roles you are called upon to perform as an elected official. It may require you to take a stand that is unpopular with many of your constituents or in opposition to the will of many of your elected colleagues. You may recall how difficult it was in the beginning and still is in many communities, to acknowledge the AIDS problem and recommend policies that would curb the spread of this dreaded disease. Or it may be apparent that a long-standing tradition in the community, such as discouraging girls from getting a technical education, is hindering economic development. Previous elected officials have not had the courage to confront this challenge, and it falls in your collective laps. As Albert Einstein would remind us, *"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."*

Involving others in your policy making responsibilities

We've talked a bit about the downside of others in your local government and community who sometimes make policies, often times on your behalf and without your involvement, and how frustrating this can be. Now we want to talk about the importance of involving others in your policy-making initiatives. Perhaps the best way to do this is to relate a story. By the way, we've inserted the word *policy* where we think a policy was either needed or implied to make this complex set of activities achieve its goal.[65]

> The Municipality of Quito, Ecuador, established a one-stop women's centre *(policy?)*. It was a joint action with several NGOs and institutions *(policy?)*. Its purpose was to assist poor women, especially those with social problems like family break-ups and domestic violence (policy?). It was able to acquire funds from the European Commission to create the one-stop centre *(policy?)*

65 Taken from a collection of cases prepared by IULA, Local Governments Working for Gender Equality. (The Hague. IULA, 2001), p13.

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It involved a special police facility to help assaulted women and girls and provide legal aid for those who couldn't get access to the legal system *(policy?)* There were other services including child care *(Policy?)*, medical services *(policy?),* addiction counselling *(policy?)*, and training to help women form their own organisations *(policy?)*.

The centre has been active in lobbying and raising awareness of gender equality and equity issues *(policy?)*. And, the City Council used this experience to develop a new municipal gender **policy.** No question, this was a policy!

While we don't know for certain, we suspect that the creation of this one-stop centre known as *Las Tres Manuelas* did, in fact or in principle, intentionally or unintentionally, formally or informally, require a number of policy decisions. Some were probably administrative-type policies, others management policies, and finally others were what we believe to be governance policies. In just a few moments we will take a look at what these different types of policies are all about. However, before we do let's look at an important issue and concern that runs through all policies and policy related issues-gender.

> *When one is helping another, both gain in strength.*
>
> **Ecuador proverb**

Gender and the policy-making process

There may be no better place in this series to talk in some depth about gender issues and elected leadership than here. After all, it is the policy-making competency that is used to forge new legislation, establish new programmes, and provide management and staff support to all *good* governance initiatives, including those that deal with gender equality and equity. One of the best sources of information and enlightenment on issues of gender equality and equity as it relates to the policy-making process comes out of Canada. The sourced is the organization *Status on Women Canada, Policy Analysis and Development Directorate in Ottawa.* Their website is: www.swc-cfc.gc.ca Much of what you are about to read has been gleaned from this website and a document called Gender-based Analysis: *A Guide for Policy-Making (revised edition, 1998).* Check it out!

The craft of formulating effective and defensible policy statements relies heavily on good definitions of the key components of many policies. This is particularly true when dealing with issues of gender. For example,

Status of Women Canada (SWC) defines some of the terms we needed for this discussion in the following way.

- ❑ **Gender** is the culturally specific set of characteristics that identifies the social behaviour of women and men and the **relationship** between them. Because it is a relational term, gender must include women and men. Gender is an analytical tool for understanding social processes, and central to the formulation of many public policies.

- ❑ **Gender equity** is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. **Equity leads to equality.**

- ❑ **Gender equality** means that women and men enjoy the same status; that they have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to all kinds of development and the benefit from these developments.

As SWC reminds us, *gender equality is the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between women and men, and the carrying roles that they play.*

These concepts are particularly useful for governing bodies and public managers who are engaged in policy-making. To help bring a gender perspective to policy-making, SWC has developed a process called gender-based analysis. It assesses the differential impact of proposed and existing policies, programmes and legislation on men and women. By doing so, it challenges the assumption that everyone is affected equally by the actions implemented by local governments based on the policy decisions of their governing bodies.

Elizabeth Carriere, *in Seeing is Believing: Educating Through a Gender Lens (1995)*, said:

Gender analysis is focused not just on outcomes, but on the concepts, arguments and language used to justify policy. How needs are interpreted and discussed is intrinsic to policy development…Gender analysis should focus on whether the policy 'talk' challenges or reinforces existing power structures based on gender.

A reflective opportunity

Try to recall a recent policy "talk" that your governing body engaged in as part of formulating a new policy or programme for your local government. Did the discussions that took place among you and your elected colleagues, and with the management staff advising you on the policy or programme, challenge the existing power relationships as they related to gender, or did they simply reinforce them?

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Looking back on that experience, what might you have done at the time to change the dynamics of that policy or programme "talk" to address gender concerns?

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Gender analysis should be a common thread that runs through the entire policy making process, from beginning to end. To see it otherwise is to relegate it to "post-it" status, i.e., the temporary sticker on the top of your governing agenda that reads THINK GENDER!

More often than not, the problem with policy-making and gender equality are the people at the top of the organisation. They don't always practice what they preach.

Birgitta Hedman, Swedish Administrator

What kinds of policies are we talking about?

While the concept of what public policies are seems to mean many things to many people and policies can be made by more than those who have the mandated role and responsibilities to make them, these aren't the core reasons why public policy-making initiatives in local governments are often so dismal. Too often, you, as local elected officials get bogged down in the wrong kinds of policy-making. Many elected officials focus on administrative and management policy-making at the expense of governance policy-making. Let's see if we can shed some light on this dilemma by looking at the different kinds of policies. There are administrative policies, management policies, and governance policies.

Administrative policies are more often than not procedures that have been established to carry out a specific function within the organization. For example, personnel procedures in most organizations would define fringe benefits, hiring procedures and other *standard operating procedures* that have been developed by staff members or managers depending on the size of the organization. They may or may not be approved by the elected body depending on the function.

In a Local Government Financial Management Series developed for local governments in Slovakia, the manual on *Financial Policy Making* identifies more than forty policies that should be adopted to assure effective and efficient management of fiscal resources. Some are fairly simple i.e. *The local government will issue an annual financial report which provides for full disclosure.* Others are more like guidelines. For example, *The local government will place increased emphasis on user charges to finance the cost of municipal services.* While many of the proposed policies in the manual would not require approval from the policy board of the local government, the authors of the manual highly recommend that all the "policies" be presented to the governing body for adoption. By the way, these short statements are policy statements. While they don't need to be long, legalistic in language, or complicated, they do require backup documentation to explain how they are to be implemented.

Local governments typically create a flood of procedures, guidelines, and what are often called policies to administer internal functions and duties. Many of them rarely go beyond the internal memorandum that spells out the procedures to be followed. Some even manage to be perpetuated by tradition. "We've always done it that way." Elected officials would be foolhardy, given their time commitments, to get involved in creating these soft versions of public policies. Nevertheless, they have a policy role in determining the values and standards that define the quality of the organisation's day-to-day operations. And, they are responsible for assuring that their administrators develop and put into action these kinds of "procedural" type policies.

Management policies get closer to becoming governing-body material. They typically involve the preparation of annual and capital budgets, the working relationships with contractors and other external working partners, and the interactions with a variety of community-based institutions. John Carver in *Boards That Make a Difference* suggests that governing board members often get thrust into a super-staff relationship with their managers on management issues when they should be taking the high road to policy making. One reason this happens is that policy board members typically "pride themselves with being decision-makers and problem-solvers. They gauge their performance by such decisions and solutions, *not by the clarity of the policies that led to them.*"[66]

To illustrate this governing displacement of energy and responsibility, Carver describes what typically happens when the manager and her staff presents the local government's proposed budget to the governing board.

> Budgets are adopted with exhaustive attention to detail but with only cursory review of the important policies inherent in the array of numbers. For example, budgets make powerful, albeit nonverbal, commentary on policies regarding fiscal risks, conservatism in projections of revenues, and

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[66]   Carver, John, Boards That Make a Difference, (San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1990),

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> apportionment of resources among competing intentions. Budgets are often cited as the most important policy statement. And so they may be, but they are poorly conceived policies. The policies represented are buried so well in numbers that few boards get past the numbers to any rigorous debate about the underlying policies. If anything, the numbers seduce governing board members into a myriad of interesting but peripheral details.[67]

Sound familiar? Any of us who have been on either end of the policy-administration continuum of local governance will recognize this dilemma.

Governance policies, driven by elected governing bodies that take a more activist role in policy formulation, are the kinds of policies Carver believes elected officials should be making. Carver also believes a governing board can gain far more control over what matters in the organization and be at less risk in getting lost in the administrative details if they focus on governance-type policy-making. He contends that policy boards need to be more proactive in promoting policies that focus on long range goals. As we will explore later, there is a direct connection between strategic planning activities and governance policy-making. But first, let's look at an impressive demonstration of proactive policy- making.

The municipal councils in the Durban, South Africa, metropolitan region have demonstrated by their actions the kinds of policy decisions advocated by Carver. With the advent of democratic government in 1994, the new South African constitution mandated local governments to promote local economic development, challenging them to adopt pro-poor policies that emphasized participation and consultation. Following municipal elections two years later, the local councils in the Durban metropolitan area began a sustained process of developing policies that would support the development of the informal sector on a region-wide basis.

With this vision clearly in mind, they undertook research on the informal sector to better understand its characteristics and needs. Working with informal sector participants, they developed policies for regulating and supporting street trading. One distinction of this consultative approach was the emphasis put on the interdependence of the formal and informal economies of Durban. Street traders were seen as a vital part of urban life and the economy of the region, not as an impediment to development as is often the case.

An inclusive process of consultation was designed and implemented involving a rich mix of stakeholders in the impact areas. They included informal and formal business associations, elected officials from the target municipalities, public officials from different levels of government, trade unions, civic groups, and forums designed to reach the less articulate, less centrally situated groups of informal sector working men and women. These consultations resulted in the development of various policy initiatives needed to support a variety of ventures that would focus on building the informal sector of the metropolitan economy.

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[67] Carver, p.32.

For example, policies were established to:

❏ Simplify registration costs for vendors and home workers and provide incentives to become registered.

❏ Include informal trader association representatives on planning and policy committees such as the Self-Employed Women's Union.

❏ Provide on-going support to trader organizations i.e. meeting places, legal advice, and secretarial help, using municipal assets whenever possible.

❏ Develop an information system that links the participating parties together.

❏ Foster collaboration between local governments and traders to improve the image of the informal economy.[68]

This remarkable case study demonstrates the power of elected leadership policy-making based on a vision, rigorous field research, widespread consultation and involvement, and a constant drive toward implementation successes.

> *Those who expect to reap the blessings of democracy must undergo the fatigue of supporting it.*
>
> **Thomas Paine, 18th Century British born American politician-author**

How to craft a policy statement

Policy-making is not a precise science. We are tempted to throw in that too-oft, overused metaphor, "Well, it's not rocket science," but frankly, policy-making isn't even good road maintenance science in most local governments around the world. To back up this rather brash innuendo, we bring in our star witness John Carver. Carver is someone who has spent much of his professional career looking over the collective shoulders of governing board members in all kinds of institutions. He says,

Current operational definitions of policy impede governing by policy. Any kind of action by the board (governing body) is often granted the legitimising title of policy. The fuzziness of the definition is a loud signal that the whole area of policy has not been taken seriously. Consequently, the

[68] Based on a case study by Jeremy Grest, The Informal Economy Policy Framework in Durban, in the publication Sustainable Urbanisation: Bridging the Green and Brown Agendas, (London, The Development Planning Unit, University College London, 2002), pp.144-5.

claim to be a policy-making body is ordinarily belied by 'policy' that is staff material with a large component of implementation specifics, only blessed by the governing body.[69]

Carver goes on to relate an experience in looking at the policy history and collection of policies enacted by a large public organization in the United States. "The paper work was inches thick. Many of the policies were long since forgotten, but still on the books." Were, he asks rhetorically of course, these policies really useful to the organization? And, then he answers his own question by saying, "For all the rhetorical glamour afforded the board's policies, they turned out to be an impotent, self-contradictory collection too important to be kept up to date."

One of the authors who served as a city manager for a number of years remembers trying to manage by the mandates of over 1600 official policies enacted by various governing bodies over many decades. These policy documents, called ordinances, had never been codified, rationalised, or purged of their inconsistencies or their time warps. The municipal staff members, for example, were theoretically responsible for enforcing an ordinance that regulated stray cows wandering around in the central business district.

In spite of Carver's cynicism and your authors' experiences in trying to manage policies that flow from governing chambers like water or vintage wine, depending on which side of the flood gates you stand, there are some hopeful signs. Policy documents are important; they declare governance stands on important issues; and they provide roadmaps for those who must put them into practice. More good news: they can also be short and simple.

Once again, we call on John Carver who has contributed as much as any one person to help governance bodies make a difference in the quality of their performance. Policies should be

- ❑ **Explicit and written:** This is the only way that others will know what the policy is designed to do. It means "laying one's values on the table, exposing differences, and confronting them openly." Openness and accountability are the principles that come into play with being explicit.
- ❑ **Current:** Up-to-date policies are the only ones that work. This means the portfolio of governing policies must be managed through annual reviews and purging sessions to get rid of outdates and contradictory policies.
- ❑ **Literal:** In other words, they must mean what they say. Carver makes the point, that "Governing is a verbal job; if a governing body's words have little integrity, governance cannot be excellent."
- ❑ **Available:** Keep them in one place and make them easily accessible to all who need to see them.

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[69]   Carver, p.41.

❑ **Brief:** While many are impressed by complexity and legalistic language that is meant only to impress other lawyers, governing bodies "need to seek the compelling elegance of simplicity."

❑ **Encompassing:** Policies must support the wholeness that governing bodies want governance to be. This sounds contradictory to the "brief" criteria but Carver sees no inherent conflict. He advised starting with the larger issues such as gender equality and equity before dealing with subordinate concerns that might be implicit in the larger policy stand.[70]

To demonstrate these criteria in action, we turn to the Financial Policy-Making manual produced in Slovakia for use by their local governments.

❑ *The local government will develop a multi-year plan for capital improvement, update it annually and make all capital improvements in accordance with the plan.*[71]

Under the centralised system of governance that had prevailed for several decades before reform in Slovakia, the unwritten policy was to present a local budget that made no distinction between capital and operating expenditures. With the introduction of local self-governance and local fiscal accountability, the process of managing fiscal resources changed dramatically. Establishing capital budgets was a major policy change for their local governments. The above policy statement seems to meet the Carver criteria.

A reflective opportunity

We've been weaving into each of the competency discussions a look at how the good governance principles provide the platform for using the various competencies and how they in turn can serve the promotion of these principles. It's pretty obvious from our discussion of the policy-making competency that policies can play a vital role in the implementation of each of the good governance principles within your local government. Given this, we want you to reflect on how you could use policy making to promote each of the good governance principles.

After each of the governance principles, describe a policy action that your elected body has taken or could take that would encompass the principle. Be as specific as possible about the focus of the policy, the target group it would involve, and the intended results, i.e. the what, who, and why inquiries. For example, you might say: *We will develop policies to provide*

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[70] Carver, pp. 42-4.
[71] Matzer, Jack. *Financial Policy Making*, (Bratislava, Slovakia. Local Government Assistance Center, 1998.), p.31.

Policy-Making

skills training and counselling for homeless women for the purpose of making them more viable in finding sustainable employment opportunities as an example of the inclusiveness principle.

1. To promote and encourage participation:

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2. To demonstrate respect and support for the rule of law:

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3. To increase transparency in elected leadership decision making:

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4. To be more responsive to all men and women in their interactions with the elected body:

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5. To be more accountable in the implementation of policies:

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6. To promote equity and inclusiveness in the development of policies:

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7. To assure that the principles of effectiveness and efficiency are incorporated into the development and delivery of all local government programmes and services:

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This is a difficult reflective task and demonstrates the challenge of building these governance principles into your policy-making responsibilities. Nevertheless, if these principles can't be reflected in your policy role and responsibilities as elected officials, it will be difficult to model the behaviours you expect from your local government managers and staff.

*Creativity is the ability to see relationships
where none exist.*

Thomas Disch

Goals>Policies>Strategies>Implementation

Do you ever find yourself confused about the differences among the terms *goals, policies* and *strategies? Implementation* is pretty clear; that's when we do something. But, those other three seem to overlap and, at times, be used interchangeably. Since they all have something to do with policy-making, it might be helpful to see how they interrelate.

Your role as policy-maker provides the opportunity to shape the future of your community and to ensure that those programmes and services important to your citizens are given precedent over others. Policies are important because they put your government "on record" regarding the more important issues facing the community. As we said before, policies are often described as "statements of intent." But, intentions don't always translate into actions and outcomes. What you should be concerned with in terms of the policy-making process is direction and results. Direction should precede policies and results follow implementation. On the other hand, a policy can also be seen as a result. As you can see, it can all get to be rather confusing. What we need is a strategy to sort it all out. It might even help to make that our immediate *goal.*

Goals are statements that describe desired future conditions worthy of community effort and commitment. They

1.   Reflect a community's basic purposes;
2.   Focus on results, not just the performance of tasks or completion of assignments; and
3. Call for a major commitment of human and material resources to assure their attainment.

Policies as stated previously are formal positions taken by the governing body to support the implementation of goals. They are also statements of intent; they state what your local government intends to do. In this context, they are not random consequences of chance behaviour. They are deliberate acts by those who possess the responsibility for making decisions that will produce anticipated results. Policies make goals legal and sanction government courses of action. They lead to the development of strategies to carry out the goals.

Strategies are the means used to accomplish goals and implement policies. Strategies should encompass a wide range of alternatives to get programmes and projects implemented. They are the "how to" part of the

puzzle. One strategy is to use a source other than local government organizations to carry out public goals and policies.

Implementation is the broad term used to describe the actions taken to carry out goals, policies and strategies. Implementation implies doing something tangible. You can physically see most implementations as they take place.

We shouldn't get too bogged down in attempts to be precise about what these terms mean since they are obviously open to interpretation. What is important to understand is the sequence of events and where policy-making fits into the sequence. First there is an awareness of what needs to be done or a vision of what can be done to improve your community. In case you haven't read the *Decision-Making* chapter, you'll find *awareness* and *vision* explained there.

This is not a responsibility that falls entirely on your shoulders as an elected official. You can expect your local government managers and staff to be fully aware and to be looking ahead. You can also count on your many constituents to be sharing their visions with you and to alert you to problems that exist in your community. Nevertheless, you and your elected colleagues are expected to provide the leadership. Out of awareness and vision comes the desire and commitment to state where you stand as a governing body and what you plan to do about it.

These position statements, more often than not, are called goals and policies although there is a tendency on the part of some governing bodies to avoid putting these positions in writing. While undeclared positions make it easier to change your mind, they create confusion on the part of the local government staff charged with carrying out your goals and policies and keep citizens in the dark about your intentions.

What we have outlined is something that many would characterize as an **enabling approach** to solving a public problem. The governing body has adopted a policy and strategy that will "enable" their citizens to develop their own water sources largely through their own initiatives.

Example

Suppose you represent a rural district as an elected official.

❑ Only twenty percent of the district residents have convenient access to a potable water supply at this time. This constitutes a **problem**.

❑ In reviewing this problem, your governing body has decided or established the **goal** that ninety-five percent of all citizens of the district should have a potable water supply within one kilometre of their primary residence within the next five years i.e. by the year

❑ Since the district doesn't have the funds available to construct all the facilities required to meet this ambitious goal, they have adopted legislation or a **policy** that spells out the facilitating role the local government will take to help citizens develop their own

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sources of potable water. This legislation has also indicated there will be penalties imposed after certain deadlines have passed if citizens are not using potable water sources in those areas designated as safe water zones.

❏ You elected body and its representatives have also detailed what they plan to do or a **strategy** to assist citizens in the implementation of this policy. The local government will assist in setting up neighbourhood user committees; provide training; locate long-term loan sources for the development of localized water sources; and provide inspection services during and after construction of the facilities to ensure that they meet certain standards.

❏ As soon as citizens begin to establish their committees, the **implementation** of the strategy has begun.

To reiterate, *goal setting* is the process of deciding the future direction your community will take to meet its needs and achieve its vision of the future. *Policies* are official positions required to put goals in motion. *Being strategic* is deciding how you're going to carry these plans through to completion by achieving the results set forth in your goal statements and policy positions. *Implementation* is the evidence that something is physically happening to carry out your goals, policies, and strategies. There's an old Chinese proverb that says *it is difficult to satisfy one's appetite by painting pictures of cake.* Making goals, policies, and strategies is painting pictures. Only when they are implemented do they become real.

A reflective opportunity

Think of a programme or new service that you as an elected official had a role in getting implemented. Jot a short description of it in the following space.

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What was the initiating event that led to its realization? Was it awareness of a problem or a vision that you or others had? Record as much information about this and the following questions to increase your understanding of the policy process that took place.

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Policy-Making

What goals or objectives did the governing body have in mind at the time to address the problem or take advantage of the opportunity to provide the new service or start the new programme?

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What policies did your governing body adopt to support the new venture?

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What, if any, administrative or managerial policies were adopted to support and sustain the new venture? These may have been adopted for operational reasons which probably meant that elected-body policy actions were not necessary.

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Was the implementation of the new venture successful? If so, how important was the process of planning and policy-making that preceded it? If not, why? Focus on any gaps in planning and policy-making that might have contributed to its less than anticipated success.

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Conviction is worthless unless it is converted into conduct.

Thomas Carlyle, 19th Century Scottish Essayist

Policy dialogue opportunities

There are many ways to carry out a policy dialogue. Some will be dictated by law, such as the requirement to hold public hearings on new legislation. Others will depend on your willingness to expose your ideas to public scrutiny and share the responsibility or opportunity for defining the community's future. Here are just a few of the ways your counterparts in other parts of the world are responding to this role challenge. They are

organized according to a continuum based on the amount of public scrutiny the various policy-making options receive before they are formally adopted or agreed upon by the elected leadership.

Low public scrutiny

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❑ Policy institute approach
❑ Governing body/staff recommendations
❑ Elected official/staff interactions
❑ Intergovernmental dialogues
❑ Governing body/community discussions
❑ Community initiatives

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High public scrutiny

The policy institute approach. Some large city governing bodies have adopted the corporate strategic planning approach that relies heavily on a professional planning unit to provide it with information and analysis on a wide range of public issues and concerns. This approach has been discredited in recent years for its tendency to become "out-of-touch" with what is really going on in the community. These units are prone to rely heavily on quantitative data and rational approaches to formulating policy options. They may not deny the political processes of negotiation and dialogue, but they don't necessarily embrace them as legitimate sources of information for long-range decision-making. Strategic planning and good governance policy-making work poorly when based largely on analytical decision-making. To be successful, these endeavours must also take into consideration the enormous influence that the institution's leadership, power structure, and organizational dynamics exert on both decisions and implementation.

Governing body/staff recommendations. Probably the most common approach to policy formulation is to rely heavily upon the local government's professional staff to make recommendations for your consideration. Their recommendations are generally tied to programmatic changes they want to make or to proposed budget allocations that may have policy implications. While this approach provides governing bodies with a professional perspective, more often than not it ignores the broader issues of the community and the council's "foreign policy agenda," meaning its interaction with neighbouring public bodies who share problems and opportunities that spill across jurisdictional boundaries.

Elected official/staff interactions. It's becoming more common for elected bodies to spend a few un-interrupted days each year thinking through long-range issues and concerns with key members of their staff. These meetings or retreats often take place in a setting away from the city and are usually organised and conducted by an outside facilitator, someone skilled in managing small group discussions. It is an opportunity for the elected men and women and their professional team to:

1. Reflect on the problems they are facing;
2. Think about opportunities to serve the community more effectively; and

3. Do some long-range planning or policy formulation.

More often than not, these retreats result in a written document that includes an action plan to be incorporated into the budget document or to serve as a blueprint for future actions by the governing body and the administrative and technical staff of the municipality.

Inter-governmental dialogues. Like countries, local governments have foreign policy agendas or issues and concerns that spill across their political boundaries, either affecting their neighbours or being affected by their neighbours. Some local officials have begun to refer to these issues and relationships as their foreign policy programme. However you want to characterize them, they can play an important role in forging an enlightened policy agenda. There is more and more recognition that local governments don't and cannot operate in blind isolation of their neighbours, those public bodies that may operate within their midst, such as water authorities and other single-purpose institutions.

With the recognition that urban problems don't stop at the city's border, it is becoming more and more urgent to establish an ongoing policy dialogue with your neighbours. Often these discussions lead to more formal arrangements, such as councils of governments, voluntary associations of elected officials who can decide to interact or not around problems and opportunities of mutual interest. These dialogues can also lead to an examination of existing policies in adjoining jurisdictions that may be counterproductive to their individual and mutual interests.

Governing body/community discussions. Many governing bodies have initiated community-wide discussions that involve a large number of individuals representing diverse interests and groups. These expanded dialogues take a variety of forms and cover different time frames. They can be single-issue oriented or include a wide spectrum of community concerns. A number of years ago, one of the authors helped a large metropolitan area to develop a set of economic policies for their region. The policy planning session was two days long and involved over 200 elected men and women, government officers, private business representatives, community leaders, church officials, labour leaders, and citizens. The participants reached consensus on a seven-point policy statement to provide direction to the region's economic development efforts. Other cities have undertaken policy planning initiatives that included hundreds of men and women of all ages and community leaders.

Community initiatives. The trend toward participatory democracy and local self-governance has prompted some local governments to work directly with neighbourhoods in helping them plan for greater involvement in the formulation and implementation of programmes and services within their locality. Sometimes the council assigns staff members to work directly with these sub-units of the local government in their efforts to be more self-reliant and directed. There are a number of excellent examples of this devolutionary approach to governance from around the world. The UN-HABITAT Local Agenda 21 initiatives helped local governments and communities in diverse

geographic locations establish community consultation processes to formulate community-based policies, plans, and programmes.

As you can see, there are many ways to engage in productive, open, inclusive, participatory, and effective policy making ventures. Sharing your policy-making powers and responsibilities with others in your community and beyond can result in good policies, good politics, and good governance.

The village which is not discussed is not built.

African proverb

Actions speak louder than words

Policies are curious manifestations of human intent. In the perfect world of good governance, they should be made in *consultation* with those who will be responsible for implementing them and with those who will be affected by their presence. They should also promote and put into operation principles of *equity* and *inclusiveness.* The *rule of law* principle pervades not just the process of policy-making but all those interactions and activities the policy sets in motion.

Public policies should also be subject to public scrutiny before and during their adoption and after they become operational. They should be responsive to the rationale that led to their creation. These are the principles of *openness* and *accountability. Effectiveness,* which we interpret as "doing the right things" as representatives of those you serve as elected officials, is central to policy-making. *Efficiency* is a management responsibility and should be backed by administrative policies that adhere to all the other good governance principles.

Unfortunately, public policy-making is sometimes the victim of less-than-principled elected and appointed official behaviour. Policies are sometimes cooked up in back rooms, never committed to public dialogue and debate, rarely committed to public documentation, made up as circumstances dictate, cater to special interests, and flaunt the rule of law.

In other words, policy-making is at the heart of both good governance and rotten politics. Just because an elected body's policies are not voted on in public meetings, written down and available for all to see and scrutinise, and the result of public dialogue doesn't mean they don't exist. When they result from the lack of all these good governance principles that we like to think drives all public official behaviour, they are, of course, less subject to accountability.

Policies, whether they are created and implemented in the purist of good governance intentions or slither from under the door of back-room political deal making, are the power of the elected office that you hold on behalf of your citizens. How are your public policies made and implemented?

Policy-Making

It is not the load but the overload that kills.

A timely proverb from the Dominican Republic

Key points

❑ Don't confuse policy-making with politics.
❑ Policy-making is made challenging because:
  • Policy means many things even though it is your unique role and responsibility as an elected official;
  • Everyone seems to make policy, sometimes on your behalf; and
  • This unique role and responsibility is greatly diminished if you don't share it with others.
❑ According to Bryson and Crosby *public policies are substantive decisions, commitments, and actions made by those who hold or affect government positions of authority, as they are interpreted by various stakeholders.*
❑ Public policies are also less important decisions, commitments, and actions taken by others with lesser authority.
❑ Involving others in your policy-making responsibilities as elected officials improves the quality of your policies and increases the chances that they will be respected and followed.
❑ Gender analysis needs to be an integral part of your policy-making process.
❑ Policies are of the administrative, managerial, and governance kind. Elected men and women, unless they also hold executive positions, should focus on governance policy-making.
❑ Policy-making is a step in the more important process of local self-governing that includes: *goals, policies, strategies, and implementation.*
❑ Elected men and women by the power invested in them will either make policies that meet good governance qualities or policies that call into question their commitment to good governance and their citizens. The choice is yours.

The needle knows what it sews and the thimble what it pushes.

Columbia proverb

Chapter 8:
The Enabling Competency

Introduction

*We are just at the beginning of an era of
essential partnerships, alliances, and coalitions.
We are learning to build community beyond the
walls of the organization, with the same kind of
initiative and energy we have used in building
the organization within the walls.*

Frances Hesselbein

Enabling is one of those relatively new concepts that are difficult to explain. And yet, it is used more and more frequently to describe various kinds of interactions among governments, civil society institutions, and citizens to put good governance principles into practice. Ms. Hesselbein, quoted above, is reflecting on her experience as a leader in the non-governmental sector and not local government. Her "construction" metaphor is useful in conveying the essence of enabling as a community building strategy.

Moreover, we believe enabling is a leadership competency that has enormous potential 1) to add value to many local government functions and responsibilities at minimal costs and 2) to infuse the democratic process at all levels of the community with vigour and purpose. Before we get into some of the *enabling skills* and strategies that you and your elected colleagues can employ in your representation and leadership roles, let's see if we can bring some light to what *enabling* means.

Defining terms

Enabling is providing the means for others to get things done. It is also much more. As we said before, the enabling competency is a bit complex. The various strategies that are embodied within the enabling competency are based on a mutuality of collaboration and trust by those involved. For an elaboration of these qualities, we turn to authors James Kouzes and Barry Posner. In *The Leadership Challenge,* they describe what they believe to be the five practices of exemplary leadership. They are as follows: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, encourage the heart, and *enable others to act.* Your ability to provide elected leadership and your ability to enable others are in many ways related to the other four practices outlined in their model.

Enabling others, according to Kouzes and Posner, is based on two fundamental commitments:

❑ Fostering collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust; and

❑ Strengthening others by sharing power and discretion.[72]

When local governments foster collaboration, they involve others in the governance process from goal setting to the implementation of programmes and services. Sharing power and resources is also important to assure that those who have been "enabled" have the means to get things done. By "others" we mean a broad range of institutional arrangements, not just individual men and women although individual efforts are not excluded in the enabling process. Here are just a few examples of how the *enabling* competency works.

❑ Enabling involves communication, not just from local government to local citizens but from the bottom of the democratic process, neighbourhoods and groups of citizens to their local governments.

❑ Enabling involves shared decision making and making decisions where they mean the most to those who have to live by their consequences.

❑ Enabling involves the decentralisation of public programmes and services whenever possible or what UN-HABITAT calls subsidiarity.

❑ Enabling is the process of building partnerships with civil society institutions as well as other units of government.

❑ Enabling is assuring that your local government organisation is delegated the authority, resources, and responsibilities to implement legislated policies, programmes and services.

❑ Enabling is a process that gets enriched and redefined by elected men and women, local governments, civil society, and citizens as the level of open communication and trust among all these community components increases.

As you can see, enabling involves in one way or another all the other elected leadership competencies highlighted by this series, and it cuts to the heart of many of the good governance principles. We will explore these connections later in this discussion but for now, it is important to recognise that the enabling competency is a reciprocal relationship with citizens, all aspects of the civil society, and the local government managers and staff. Being reciprocal, enabling flows both ways.

It is difficult to talk about *enabling* and how the process works without also discussing *civil society*. Incidentally, this is another term that means many things to many people. More often than not, your efforts to be *enablers* in your role and responsibilities as elected leaders will involve some aspect of what has become known as the civil society. Before we tackle the civil society notion in more depth, it's time to reflect on these two simple but complicated concepts: enabling and civil society. They are deeply intertwined

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[72] Kouzes, James M. and Barry Z. Posner, The Leadership Challenge, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2002), p.22.

in efforts to bring good governance to the citizens of all ages and to the diversity of local communities.

A reflective opportunity

Think about the phrase "civil society" and what it means to you. Jot down a few ideas about your own interpretation of this term.

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Now, what do you understand the "enabling" competency to mean as it relates to the roles and responsibilities of your governing body? Jot down an example or more of how your local government has "enabled" others to act more effectively as partners in the governing process.

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Finally, what are the connections between the process of enabling and the development of a civil society?

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In the long history of humankind those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.

Charles Darwin, 19th Century English naturalist

Enabling and civil society: What's the connection?

Since the term *civil society* figures so prominently in discussions about good governance and there is considerable confusion about what exactly civil society consists of, we thought it might be useful to spend a few moments

exploring it. Charles Bahmueller, in a decidedly academic tome on civil society and democracy, starts his discussion by saying,

> 'Civil society' is on everyone's lips, but not everyone means the same thing when they say it, nor can anyone 'accurately' define civil society...because the term has become so prominent, writers often wish to claim it for their cause; as a result, definitions of civil society often reflect the 'job' one wishes it to perform.[73]

Precisely! And we plan to claim it for our cause which is elected leadership development. We will also define civil society to reflect the scope of opportunities available to elected officials and local governments to use their enabling competencies and powers.

Bahmueller, as is often the case with research papers, regales us with a wide range of definitions garnered over centuries of contemplation by others. He reminds us that the terms come from the Romans, who spoke of *societas civilis* as far back as 450 B.C. While its roots are western, it is also a term that has been adopted widely, i.e., in Asia and Africa in discussions of governance. More importantly, Bahmueller provides a definition that fits our needs in helping you better understand the *enabling competency.*

> Civil society encompasses the whole range of civic action independent of formal political institutions. It includes service associations, philanthropic groups, cultural groups, religious organisations, labour unions, athletic organisations, youth and women groups, plus many more in every imaginable field of interest or endeavour. The concept also embraces economic relations, organisations, and activities not owned or directly controlled by the state.[74]

In other words, civil society as defined by Bahmueller and adopted for use in this series, covers all non-governmental elements of our societies, not just the NGOs and CBOs, community-based organisations, that are so often interpreted as being civil society. In other words, if it isn't government, it's civil society. This is an important distinction to keep in mind when applying your leadership enabling skills and competencies. We will be relating a case situation a bit later about a local government in Venezuela that resolved a nationally mandated health service responsibility by *enabling* a mix of private and non-governmental organisations to assume the service providing roles. Hopefully, this case study will help clarify the relationships between your enabling role as elected officials and civil society.

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[73] Bahmueller, Charles F. "Civil Society and Democracy Reconsidered" Sociedad Civil, Vol.No.1, 1996 (Mexico City), pp.63.
[74] Bahmueller, p.69.

The functions of civil society

We are focusing on civil society in our exploration of the enabling competency because it is fundamental to democracy and good governance. Larry Diamond, co-editor of the *Journal of Democracy*, outlines what he believes to be the ten "democratic functions" of civil society. They both highlight the importance of local governments collaborating with civil society and the importance of civil society's independent role in assuring that local governments adhere to the principles of good governance. Civil society's democratic functions, according to Larry Diamond, include:

❑ Limiting state powers by monitoring the abuse of power, such as corruption and vote fraud, and mobilising society to protest such abuses.

❑ Supplementing the role of political parties in stimulating political participation.

❑ Developing attributes such as toleration and moderation that are crucial to the development of democracies.

❑ Providing non-political ways to articulate, aggregate, and represent interests, particularly at the local levels of governance.

❑ Establishing voluntary associations that transcend in their concerns the fault lines of regions, religion, class, ethnicity, and other special interests.

❑ Recruiting and training potential political leaders outside the mainstream of political parties.

❑ Helping to build democracy through educating citizens, young and old about democracy and the democratic processes.

❑ Helping to achieve economic reforms that strengthen democratic processes.

❑ Strengthening emerging democratic states by pressuring them into patterns of behaviour that enhance their legitimacy. In other words, help them through gentle persuasion to become everything they need to be in order to achieve good governance for their citizens.[75]

Civil society is a potentially powerful ally in helping you and your local government achieve and sustain successes in providing services to men, women, boys, and girls. It is also an important counterbalance to help you, your elected colleagues, and your local government organisation adhere to the principles of good governance and to keep the faith of your citizens. Civil society is the yin and yang of responsible local self-governance.

Be like the tree that covers with flowers the hand that shakes it.

Japanese proverb

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[75] Diamond, Larry. "Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation." Journal of Democracy 5 (July 1994): pp-4-17.

A reflective opportunity

Before we leave this exploration of civil society and how it fits into the enabling competency, we suggest you spend a few minutes to reflect on the collaborative relationships your local government and particularly your governing body has with civil society as defined by Bahmueller. Who are your most important partners in your jurisdiction's civil society?

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How have your elected governing body and your local government administrators and staff "enabled" these civil society groups or organisations to help you achieve your goals and objectives?

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What might you do as a governing body to enhance your efforts to enable your civil society to be more actively involved in the formulation and execution of public policies and programmes?

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Join with good people and you will be one of them.

Venezuelan proverb

Enabling in action

In the joint publication by UN-HABITAT, British Government Department of International Development (DFID) and Development Planning Unit University College London (DPU) on *Implementing the Habitat Agenda*, there is a discussion of "an enabling approach" as it relates to housing. It provides additional clues to help us understand what this competency is all about.

The 'enabling' approach to the production and management of housing encourages and supports both large and small initiatives, investments and

> expenditures by individuals, households, communities, businesses and voluntary organisations, in a framework articulated by the government. Within this approach, the government is no longer considered as the 'provider' of houses, but as the 'enabler' of strategies that allow the provision of adequate housing. Under this enabling role, governments are expected to facilitate improvements in the housing process by the private and community sectors, thereby ensuring better standards and efficient production.[76]

They go on to say that the emphasis on enabling is becoming increasingly important as a process within the broader framework of democratic and participatory governance as they relate to development. The enabling framework involves the cross section of community institutions with local governments often providing the leadership in mobilising them. In addressing housing concerns at the local level, local governments might "enable" housing associations, building societies, cooperatives, non-governmental and community-based organisations, citizen movements, and other civil society institutions to help them achieve sustainable successes.

Using their enabling competencies, local governments intervene in a myriad of ways to assure that barriers are removed, support is given, enabling legislation is enacted using the policy making competency, resources are mobilised, and decisions are made that will *enable others to act* to address complex challenges at the community level of governance. To better understand local government's enabling role, let's look at an initiative in Maracaibo, Venezuela. By collaborating with several private companies and community organisations, the city was able to provide health services to the poor when it was suddenly mandated that responsibility.

Enabling in Maracaibo, Venezuela

When Venezuela decentralised its governing process in 1993, the responsibility for health care was transferred to local governments. This legislated move hit the city of Maracaibo particularly hard since the provision of health care to the poor within their jurisdiction was the in their worst state. While the newly elected governing body of the city established health care services to the poor as one of its highest priorities, it was faced with budget constraints. As a result, the council had to abandon the traditional service approach of using hospitals and ambulances that had been supported by the national government in order to make good on the policy commitment.

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[76] UN-HABITAT, Department of International Development, and The Development Planning Unit University College London, Implementing the Habitat Agenda in Search of Urban Sustainability. 2001, p. 104.

In its search for an alternative health care approach that would serve the poor in the city, the elected body adopted an idea from two local physicians who recommended the city establish mobile clinics. With the assistance of several private companies and various community organisations, the municipality was able to establish mobile clinics and consequently provide preventative and curative health care on a regular basis to these isolated communities within the city. For example, a petroleum company provided gasoline for the mobile clinics at a discounted rate; a large corporation underwrote preventative education in oral hygiene; and the Association of Neighbourhoods served as a link between the health teams and local citizens. By enabling others in the community to get involved in primary health care to the poor, the municipality was able to resolve a service obligation brought on by decentralisation.[77]

> *There are two ways of spreading light:*
> *To be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.*

> **Edith Wharton, 20th Century American novelist**

The enabling power of information and ideas

One of the most effective ways to enable others is to stimulate the flow of ideas and information from the bottom up, top down, and all around. Information and ideas are important sources of political power. While we have talked about the communicating competency in an earlier chapter, it was directed mostly to the process of communicating from the perspective of the elected official and the governing body. Now we want to take a look at some ways to communicate information and ideas from the citizen perspective, from the bottom up. Included in our explorations will be public deliberation, study circles, and focus groups. These techniques all have a lot in common. They provide citizens of all ages with alternative ways to voice their ideas, insights, and concerns to those in positions of political power and authority. They are based on the premise that *enabling* initiatives on the part of local governments and their officials can be stimulated and implemented when citizens provide information, ideas, and options that are based on shared concerns.

Just as this chapter was being written, the citizens in the Republic of Georgia used a rich mix of public deliberation and forums to communicate to their government that it was time for a change. The president reciprocated by stepping down from power, enabling a peaceful transition. It is an extreme example of how the application of the *enabling* competency flowed back and

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[77] Fiszbein, Ariel and Pamela Lowden, *Working Together for a Change*, (Washington, DC, The World Bank, 1999), pp. 106-8.

forth between the government and the civil society to bring about political and social change within that society. While both sides of that transition struggle could have used raw power in attempts to force the hand of the other, they exercised restraint. It appears that the lines of communication and mutual trust among the key actors in this situation were never totally severed in spite of the conflict that swirled around them. As we mentioned earlier, communication and trust are key to the enabling process. They also help political and social revolutions to be *velvet* not violent. Now, let's look at some enabling tools for information and ideas, starting from the grassroots of the civil society.

Public deliberation

Public deliberation in most democracies is a time-honoured tradition. Basically, it is the process of learning and reasoning together around a public issue of shared concern. However, the process has become more organised in recent years, thanks to organisations like the Kettering Foundation through their programme *Making Choices Together*. While the Foundation publishes issue books on subjects that are important to a national audience like crime, health care, and environmental concerns which are in turn used by local groups to explore these common issues, public deliberations are not dependent on these issue papers.

Public deliberations are not public debates where those involved take opposite sides on an issue and do verbal battle across a line drawn in the sand. As the Kettering Foundation reminds those who have participated in hundreds of public deliberations sponsored by their organisation:

> Deliberation is different. It is neither a partisan argument where opposing sides try to win nor a casual conversation conducted with polite civility. Public deliberation is a means by which citizens make tough choices about basic purposes and directions for their communities and their country. It is a way of reasoning and talking together.[78]

They go on to make the following suggestions about the use of this approach to reasoning and talking together. It is important to frame any public deliberation in terms of three or four options for dealing with an issue, never just two polar alternatives. Otherwise they can quickly turn into debates between those who are for one of the alternatives and against the other. To deliberate is also to weigh the consequences and costs of various options based on what is important to those deliberating.

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[78] *Making Choices Together: The Power of Public Deliberation.* (Dayton, Ohio, USA, Kettering Foundation, 2002), p. 10. For more information log on to their website: *www.kettering.org*

While the Foundation has its own process for orchestrating national forums on "hot topics" of widespread interests and concerns, it is less prescriptive when it comes to advising local communities on how to organise and conduct public deliberations. For example, public deliberations can be initiated by just about any concerned man or woman or organisation, involve from a few individuals to several hundred, be held in the corner of the local library or a public auditorium, last from two to three hours in single or multiple timeframe, and be moderated or not, although they strongly suggest using a moderator.

They provide an example of a grassroots-type deliberation.

> A neighbourhood had a terrible mosquito problem. They also had a neighbourhood association and a neighbour who knew something about the public deliberation process. This individual gathered information from other communities about how they controlled mosquitoes and produced a little booklet called Those Pesky Mosquitoes which outlined the three most common approaches to the problem. He organised a meeting room and sent out a letter inviting people to attend a public forum to weigh the three options. About fifty people came and their deliberation resulted in committees being formed who in turn took actions to eliminate the mosquitoes with a minimum of environmental damage.[79]

Those who moderate public deliberations are encouraged to follow these guidelines, to explain them to those participating, and to get agreement on them before any deliberation begins.

- ❑ The purpose of the deliberation is to work toward a decision, to try to make a choice.
- ❑ Everyone is encouraged to participate so no one will dominate.
- ❑ Listening is as important as talking.
- ❑ Participants should talk to each other, not just the moderator.
- ❑ It is important to keep the discussion on track and on the option being discussed at the time. The moderator can do this, but all participants are encouraged to perform this function.
- ❑ Participants must fairly consider every option and fully examine all the trade-offs involved in a choice. A diversity of views is essential.

Moderators are also encouraged to ask the following four questions when appropriate to move the deliberation toward common ground.

1. What is valuable to us? Variations on this question include the following: How has this issue affected you personally? What is appealing about the options being considered? What makes this option a good idea or a bad one?
2. What are the costs or consequences associated with the various options?
3. What are the conflicts in this issue that have to be worked through?

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[79] Making Choices Together, p. 24.

4. Can we detect any shared sense of direction or common ground for action?

Before bringing such a public deliberation to a close, it is usually a good idea to reflect on what has been accomplished. Questions like the following are often helpful at this time.

❑ How has your thinking changed about this issue?
❑ How has your thinking changed about the views of other people?
❑ What didn't we work through?
❑ What do we still need to talk about?
❑ How can we use what we learned? [80]

Public deliberation has many variations. Next take a look at an approach that has grown into a substantial business, helping others learn how to use *Study Circles* to improve local governments and community life.

Study circles

While Study Circles are largely an enabling process used in the United States, we encourage you to think about them as a potential resource for your own communities. The concept took shape when a small foundation in a small community in Connecticut established a resource centre in 1989 to promote public deliberation on important social and political issues. Since that time they have become a national force in promoting public dialogues at the local level. You can learn more about the study circle approach through their web site: www.studycircles.org. In the meantime, here is a short description of how the process works.

A study circle:

❑ Is a process for small group deliberation that is voluntary and participatory;
❑ Is a small group, usually 8 to 12 participants;
❑ Is led by a facilitator who is impartial, who helps manage the deliberation process, but who is not an "expert" or "teacher" in the traditional sense;
❑ Considers many perspectives, rather than advocating a particular point of view;
❑ Uses ground rules to set the tone for a respectful, productive discussion;
❑ Is rooted in dialogue and deliberation, not debate;
❑ Has multiple sessions which move from personal experience of the issue to considering multiple viewpoints to strategies for action;

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[80] These good ideas about deliberation were taken from Making Choices Together, p. 27-30.

❑ Does not require consensus, but uncovers areas of agreement and common concern; and

❑ Provides an opportunity for men and women, boys and girls to work together to improve their community.[81]

The study circle process of deliberation can be organised around any public issue that concerns the community. It could be violence, racial or ethnic conflicts, crime, the need for better education opportunities, issues of inclusions and equity, or the need for more openness and transparency within government. It can also be sponsored and endorsed by a wide range of local institutions including the elected government body.

Typically, study circle programmes are initiated out of concern about an issue of community-wide interest. In most communities, one organisation takes the lead and approaches other key organisations to build a sponsoring coalition. For example, your elected body could start the process by getting several NGOs and community-based organisations involved. Often the organisers will run a pilot phase of a few study circles if they see the process as involving an increasing number of circles. It gives them an opportunity to try out the process, to train study group facilitators, and to get organised.

The most impressive aspect of this process is the potential to engage a large number of citizens in community-wide dialogues in very small groups on a common issue that has defied resolution within the larger community. The small study circles can be formed at the neighbourhood level with the results of these deliberations being shared in larger forums where the ideas and priorities for action are brought together for further discussion. These series of dialogues can ultimately involve a widening circle of participants. This process typically looks like this.

❑ It starts with a large public meeting designed to call attention to the programme and the focus the dialogues will take and to encourage citizens to participate.

❑ This large meeting is followed by many study circles meeting at the same time across the community. These sessions usually involve several sessions.

Session 1: How does this issue affect me personally? These personal statements heighten the awareness and immediacy of the issue in personal terms and builds ownership within the group.

Session 2: What is the nature of the problem? This session brings out a range of views about the issue being considered and increases a shared understanding of its complexity and its importance.

Session 3: What are the approaches for addressing this problem? A range of views and options start to emerge for consideration.

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[81] A Guide for Training Study Circle Facilitators (Pomfret, Connecticut, USA, Study Circles Resource Centre, 1998), p.14.

Session 4: What are we going to do about this issue in our community? This begins to move it toward actions. Notice the choice of words, "going to do" about the issue, rather than plan to inform others about how we feel about it.

❏ These smaller group sessions are followed by a large public meeting where study circle participants and other community members come together to hear about the deliberations of others and carry the deliberation forward and to move closer to taking formal actions to address the issue that prompted the initiation of the study circle movement.

Study circles are a variation on the public deliberation approach detailed earlier but differ enough to warrant discussion as an enabling tool. The Study Circles Research Centre is an excellent source of training materials, case studies, and research on the use of this enabling approach. We urge you to visit their website that was listed earlier.

Focus groups

The focus group is another tool for getting useful information, feedback, and ideas from local citizens and representatives of particular interests and groups within your community. While the process is often associated with customer service evaluation within the private sector, it is an excellent tool to put in your enabling toolkit. Focus group discussions can help you as an individual elected official or as a governing body receive valuable feedback from constituents while reassuring them that their opinions are valued and taken seriously.

What is a focus group? A focus group is an informal gathering of men and/or women whose opinions are requested about a specific topic or several topics depending on your goal. The intent is to elicit perceptions, ideas, insights, and experiences from your citizens about the topic or topics. Focus groups usually include from six to twelve participants and normally last between one and two hours. Diversity may or may not be important depending on what you hope to accomplish. For example, if you want to determine how women feel about the hiring practices of your local government, you might want to limit the focus group to only women. Nevertheless, it might be useful to have diversity within such a group, i.e. members of different ethnic groups, ages, backgrounds, and education. The makeup of your focus group will depend in large measure what you hope to learn from the group. It's also helpful to select individuals who have little or no acquaintance with others in the group.

How are focus groups managed? Focus group discussions are facilitated or moderated events. Someone needs to plan and manage the

discussions and that person should possess facilitating competencies. This is just another reminder of how these competencies are intertwined. While it is important to prepare a list of questions or topics to be discussed, it's important not to be too prescriptive. A focus group discussion should feel free-flowing and relatively unstructured. Given this, it helps to select the venue carefully. An informal setting with a minimum of distractions where every person can see all others is important. Holding focus groups in crowded barrooms and football stadiums, particularly during championship matches, is not advisable.

Participants should, if possible, be contacted personally by the moderator about participating. This personal contact should be followed with a written invitation that provides information about the objectives of the meeting, the venue, time required, and any ground rules that might be useful. These details should be reviewed at the beginning of the focus group discussion along with introductions.

What does a focus group accomplish? The purpose of focus groups is not to reach a consensus, to make other kinds of decisions or to solve problems. Rather, it is to obtain a range of opinions from the participants on the topic or topics for which the session has been convened. Since each participant's point of view is of interest and equally valued, the moderator is expected to encourage all participants to express their points of view about each topic. Remember that focus groups are used to hear what people are thinking about the topic(s) in their own words.

What makes a focus group discussion different? The interaction of the participants is important to observe as well as what they are saying. It is often the unexpected comments, or the flow of a discussion that takes it away from the intended focus of the group, that provide the most important findings. The insights that officials have about a particular issue to be discussed by a focus group may be fuzzy and not very well defined. For example, your governing body may be considering a new programme to support homeless people. While you may have good intentions and are considering a programme idea that was successful in other municipalities, the insights and impressions of a cross section of your own homeless population will be invaluable before you commit scarce resources to their cause.

In almost every successful dialogue, someone will admit to a concern or express an idea that others share but are reluctant to express openly. The astute moderator is one who looks for these expressions and helps the group to explore them in some depth. These are often the gems of insight that make focus groups so valuable.

What happens to the results? It is important for the moderator to record as quickly and accurately as possible what has been said and to prepare a report accordingly. We are assuming that focus groups are organised and conducted for the purpose of improving local government performance in some targeted area. Given this, the results should become part of either a governing or management review. In either case, the results

should be shared with those who can use them to make timely improvements.

The reports from the focus group discussion should also be shared with those who participated in the focus group discussion. To do so increases the trust between those who have contributed their time, insights, and opinions to the process. Focus group discussions provide windows of insight into the community that might not otherwise be open to the governing body. They are also an effective way for individual elected men and women to learn more about what their constituents are thinking.

> *No sooner have you spoken than what you have*
> *said becomes the property of another.*
>
> **Hindustan proverb**

A reflective opportunity

We have just discussed three different ways to enable citizens to share their ideas and insights with you, your elected colleagues, and others in the local government. Select one of the approaches and think about how you might use it to enable local citizens, young and old to have a greater voice in the formulation of policies, programmes and services within your community.

What issue or concern is your government body currently grappling with that could benefit from an increased flow of information and ideas from citizens?

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Check the following approach you would like to use to involve them in exploring this issue or concern in more depth: Public Deliberation: ___; Study Circles: ___; Focus Group: __.

Devise a strategy for implementing this enabling approach, i.e., who would you involve; how would you get it started; what kind of help would you need, etc.

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Enabling through shared decision making

Supporting the flow of information and ideas from the citizens upward is the first step in enabling others in the community to be involved in local self-governance. The sharing of public decision-making powers with diverse communities is a quantum leap forward in the enabling process. Here are two examples of elected leaders sharing their decision-making powers with citizens.

Barra Mansa, Brazil. About 35% of the population of Barra Mansa, Brazil, are children. As with most local governments, the specific needs of children other than education were rarely taken into consideration in the process of city planning and management. Faced with growing drug problems and violence among their youthful population, Barra Mansa's local government established a programme aimed at promoting the effective participation of children and youth in the governing process. One aspect of the programme was to create a council which allows the youth of the city to participate in the annual budget decisions.

The budget participation process involved a series of plenary sessions organised at the neighbourhood, municipal, and regional levels with the initial involvement at schools. Throughout the process, efforts were made to balance the participation of girls and boys of different age groups. The results have included projects that were identified by this process such as recreation programmes and lighting dangerous areas in some neighbourhoods. Equally important, the several thousand boys and girls who participated in this annual process have become much more knowledgeable about local government management, its limits and responsibilities, and the legitimacy of public authorities representing society. [82]

Portland, Oregon. Portland, with a population of less than 500,000, has nearly one hundred neighbourhood associations. The city government invites all of these associations and other civic groups to prepare budget proposals for service improvements and new or repaired facilities in their neighbourhoods. The associations decide how they will assess their needs and many hold public hearings and conduct citizen surveys. The city's Office of Neighbourhood Associations forwards these proposals to the proper city departments for consideration. Of the several hundred need reports submitted annually, over forty percent have been funded over the more than thirty years the neighbourhood associations have been in operation. Some neighbourhoods have also created their own funding mechanisms for local development.[83]

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[82] Children and Young People's Participatory Budget in Barra Mansa, Implementing the Habitat Agenda In Search of Urban Sustainability, (London, The Development Planning Unit University College London, 2001), pp.174-5.
[83] Epstein, Paul D. Using Performance Measurement in Local Government, (New York, National Civic League Press, 1998), p.150.

Out of this neighbourhood movement evolved another voluntary effort called The City Repair Project (CRP) that was created to "educate and inspire communities and individuals to creatively transform the places where they live." This new organisation was borne out of the success of one of the neighbourhood's initiatives to transform a residential street intersection into a neighbourhood public square. Since CRP's creation seven years ago, its organisers have helped over ninety-five neighbourhood associations in Portland and the metropolitan area create public meeting areas.

These grassroots initiatives have received national attention and CRP representatives have been telling their enabling story to other local governments across the country. One citizen who organised a community presentation about CRP before a city governing body meeting over two thousand miles from where CRP started said, "In Oregon, it's the citizens who are taking the power back, getting governments and businesses on board." More information about CRP can be found at: www.cityrepair.org

Be the change you want to see in the world.

Gandhi, 20th century Indian National leader

Forming partnerships

John Bryson and Barbara Crosby remind us in their book *Leadership for the Common Good* that we live in a world where no one is in charge. They are talking about the kinds of problems that often outstretch the ability of local governments to cope with them successfully. These problems include the homeless, drugs, victims of domestic violence including wife assault, child abuse, local economies wiped out by globalisation, inequities and disruptive tensions between genders, races, and classes, depletion of natural resources, pollution that pours across geographical boundaries and corruption that cuts political boundaries - the list seems endless. In a world where seemingly no one is in charge of these major social, economic, environmental, and cultural problems, Bryson and Crosby are advocating a shared-power approach. "Organisations and institutions that share objectives must also partly share resources and authority in order to achieve their collective goals." [84]

To put it within the context of this discussion, how can you, your governing body, and local government forge the kinds of shared-power arrangements that are increasingly essential to tackle those problems where "no one is in charge?" One way is to forge partnerships, to collaborate with

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[84] Bryson, John and Barbara C. Crosby, Leadership for the Common Good, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishing, 1992), p.4.

other sectors of the society to get things done. Robert Putman in his classic study of communities in Italy in the 1970s validates the importance of such partnerships and networks of resources. Putnam found that success in good governance is based on the degree of trust, reciprocity, and civic engagement that is woven into the fabric of the community.

The "civic community", Putnam's way of describing networks and norms of civic engagement, is fuelled by active participation in public affairs where the focus is on the public good rather than narrowly defined parochial ends.[85] Unfortunately, in many local governments there is a significant gap between Putnam's view of the civic community and its reality. Nevertheless, forging partnerships between local governments and civil society institutions is one way to narrow that gap. Before discussing how to build partnerships, we want to explore the many roles that civil society organisations and groups can perform in partnering with your local government.

Potential civil society - local government partnership roles

A consortium of international organisations produced an excellent publication on building public-private partnerships entitled *Focusing Partnerships: A Sourcebook for Municipal Capacity Building in Public-Private Partnerships.* Here are some of the many service roles they believe non-governmental organisations can perform in partnership with local governments.

- ❑ **Project formulation and development.** Often community-based organisations are more familiar with the capacity and needs that exist at the grass-roots level of local governments. They often know not only what the needs are particularly in the lower income neighbourhoods, but they also are aware of what has worked and not worked in past initiatives.

- ❑ **Capacity building.** To be successful, new local government initiatives may require new knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour from citizens. Often NGOs and CBOs have the human and physical resources to provide training and development interventions at the community level.

- ❑ **Community interface.** Community based groups and organisations often have gained the cooperation and trust of local citizens through their previous involvements. This ability to relate to citizens in a helping relationship is valuable in planning new or different approaches to local government service delivery. Grass-roots organisations often know where the potential barriers are to bringing about changes.

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[85] Putnam, Robert. Making Democracy Work: Civic Transitions in Italy. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993), p.87.

❑ **Awareness building.** They can help get the word out through non-conventional ways that local governments might not have in terms of skills and resources.

❑ **Advocacy.** Low-income communities, indigenous peoples, and other disadvantaged groups in your local government's domain may not be adequately represented in elected or appointed decisions. Or they may believe that they need help to be recognised and treated as equals in partnership initiatives with their local government. Often NGOs and other civil society organisations can be their advocate to assure that the good governance principles of equality and inclusion are honoured.

❑ **Service provider.** We've discussed this option before, but it is an important partnership role. Often when low-income neighbourhoods get involved in providing services that have traditionally been carried out by local government employees, some of the other roles just mentioned also come into play, i.e. capacity building and awareness raising.

❑ **Cost recovery.** This is an issue that cuts across the good governance principles of effectiveness and efficiency. Cost recovery is particularly difficult in low-income neighbourhoods and often the unwillingness to pay for services is linked to inferior service. Community-based organisations can often help citizens recognise the importance of developing a culture of willingness to pay for services if equity of service is assured.

❑ **Monitoring and evaluation.** These functions are often associated with the role of advocacy within lower income communities or with those who believe they are being discriminated against by their local government. For example, women and children are often short changed in getting services and access to decision making opportunities. Often evaluation results can help point out these discrepancies and NGOs often have the skills and the contacts to conduct these governance tactics.

❑ **Conflict resolution and arbitration.** Rare is the local government that doesn't have conflicts from time to time with citizens from its diverse communities. Partnerships with civil society organisations can be valuable in resolving conflicts

❑ **Funding channels.** When local governments are confronted with getting funds to individuals or families, such as in a natural disaster, neighbourhood partners can be invaluable.[86]

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[86] Plummer, Janelle and contributing others, Focusing Partnerships A Sourcebook for Municipal Capacity Building in Public-Private Partnerships (London. Earthscan Publications, 2002), pp. 93-5.

How to build local government-civil society partnerships

Partnerships for local governments involve joining other institutions, groups, or individuals to accomplish mutually beneficial goals and objectives. These partnerships can be as diverse as:

❑ Contracting out certain services to private sector firms or NGOs.

❑ Establishing joint ventures between a local government operating department and neighbourhood organisations. For example, in India, it is common to return 50% of the cost of collecting garbage back to neighbourhoods for their involvement in providing the service.

❑ Working with local religious organisations to provide shelter for the homeless.

❑ Establishing neighbourhood watch programmes to help police provide security in high-risk areas of the municipality.

❑ Providing vouchers for low-income families to purchase health services from their choice of providers.

❑ Subsidising certain functions, such as the construction of low-income housing, to enable more families to have access to affordable shelter.

❑ Divesting of certain public services where it becomes obvious that civil society organisations can manage them more effectively and efficiently.

❑ Providing equipment purchases for volunteer fire departments.

We suspect that you can add many more examples from your own experience. The intent in all of these examples is to expand the potential of programme and service delivery of your local government as efficiently as possible by "enabling" others to get involved.

So far, applying your enabling competency sounds very positive, but unfortunately not all enabling initiatives and partnerships are wise or warranted. We will visit the dark side of this competency a bit later but for now we want to shed some light on how to get ready to expand your partnering endeavours.

We can safely assume that your local government is already involved in many partnership arrangements with civil society organisations and groups. We will also assume that you may want to review these relationships and add to them in the future as you apply your enabling competencies. Given these assumptions, we suggest you consider the following assessment and planning process.

Step One: Have your staff conduct an inventory of all the partnerships your local government is currently involved in. Assess the successes and failures and lessons learned from these ventures.

Step Two: Determine what it is that your local government wants to achieve by establishing more partnerships, thus enabling the civil society to get more directly involved in helping to provide local programmes and services. Is it to strengthen the implementation of specific good governance principles like inclusion, equity, efficiency, effectiveness, or subsidiarity? Is it to further enhance Putnam's concept of the "civic community"? Is it to foster the development of future elected leadership within your local government? Or, are there other reasons?

Step Three: After determining what you, your elected colleagues, and staff want to achieve by reaching out and building partnerships, you will need to conduct a survey of possible enabling opportunities. Think in terms of contracting, outsourcing, collaborative efforts, delegation, and other strategies that will enable others to become more involved with your local government in making decisions, delivering services, and generally helping to fulfil its commitment to good governance principles.

Step Four: Carry out an inventory of civil society institutions that have the potential to be responsible and responsive partners. These can be private sector firms, NGOs, ethnic and religious associations, community-based organisations, neighbourhood groups, and even collections of individuals who have demonstrated the capacity and commitment to being part of the civic community.

Step Five: Based on these inquiries and assessments, your governing body and the local government management team can develop a strategic plan for enabling others to become partners in building networks and norms of civic engagement. Such a plan would include focusing on the scope and content of any partnership arrangement, agreeing on the principles that will form the foundation of the partnership, establishing appropriate organisational and contractual arrangements, determining what can be done to enhance the capacities of all partners in the arrangement, and determining how the overall impact of each partnership arrangement will be monitored and evaluated.

The key elements of a local government-civil society partnership should include:

❑ clarifying realistic objectives;
❑ defining the basic principles of the partnership;
❑ establishing the programme of change;
❑ defining the scope and functions of the arrangement;
❑ identifying the key partners, their roles and relationships;
❑ defining levels of service and how the poor will be the focus;
❑ identifying the potential financing mechanisms;
❑ establishing the legal and regulatory framework; and
❑ identifying the major risks.[87]

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[87] Plummer, Janelle, p.291.

There is so much more that could be said about the partnership focus of the enabling competency, but we want to conclude this part of the discussion with an example of enabling and partnering from Indonesia.

A case of equatorial enabling

Indonesia has had a long history of *enabling* organised improvements in *kampungs*-urban neighbourhoods-, to help them integrate into the regular development programmes of the cities where they are located. Often these development activities involved widespread public participation and a rich mix of civil society institutions. For example, the Kampung Improvement Programme (KIP) in Surabaya, an eastern Java industrial city, was based on a partnership between the local government, an NGO, the Surabaya Institute of Technology staff, students, and numerous kampungs. Once the KIP was undertaken by this consortium of institutional and human resources, it quickly involved other stakeholders. With a focus on low-income neighbourhoods, the improvement programme covered a wide range of interrelated problems, i.e. housing, health and environmental concerns, and employment. It also proved to be a training ground for developing future decision makers to serve governmental organisations and those associated with civil society.[88]

> *No matter how stout, one beam cannot support a house.*
>
> **Indonesian proverb**

A reflective opportunity

Partnering with civil society institutions and groups is one of the most important enabling strategies you have available for expanding the capacity of your local government. Given this, we encourage you to list in the space below as many local government-civil society partnerships as you can within the next two minutes. Yes, two minutes. We suggest you time yourself.

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[88] Building the City With the People, (Mexico City, Habitat International Coalition, 1997), pp.146-7.

Now for the reflective part of the opportunity. Select from this list those you believe were most successful, jot them down, and list why you think they were successful.

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Finally, think about a partnership you believe should be created between your local government and a community organisation. Jot down some notes on why it is needed, who it would involve, what it would do, and how you might initiate the possibility of it happening.

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Some additional and miscellaneous aspects of *enabling*

There are several other aspects of the enabling competency that we believe important to cover. They include a short discussion of whether *delegating* is an enabling strategy; the catchall phrase *networking* as an enabling tool; the enabling competency and how it relates to the good governance principles and interacts with the other competencies in this series; the potential "dark" side of enabling; and the important role of *trust* in enabling relationships. As you might guess, the last two issues are related.

Delegating
Delegating is an important enabling strategy, but it is more often associated with managerial discretion. While we will cover this enabling strategy in the *Institution Building* competency chapter, we believe the principles of delegation apply to many partnering relationships. Basically, delegation is providing others with the authority, responsibility, and freedom to operate on your behalf. It is recognition that they have the skills and will to act.

Networking
Networking is another one of those terms that has more meanings and strategies attached to it than we are competent to cover. No doubt you have often heard such remarks as, "She is a fantastic networker." We also suspect that you never really probed just what that person meant by "networker." Nevertheless, whatever it might mean to different people, networking is probably a great enabler. Here's our feeble attempt to put some meaning to the term.

Networking is a process that ignores some of the attributes of more formal, bureaucratic systems of decision making and problem solving. It is characterized by loose connections of task-oriented individuals and organisations coming together in informal groupings to expand resources and solve problems. Networking suggests an ever-widening knowledge of community resources that can be tapped to solve problems.

For example, you learned just the other day that the local brick factory is willing to make its truck available on Saturdays at no cost to haul building materials to one of the low-income areas in your city. You also heard that a building is being torn down in another part of town and some of the building materials that are destined for the sanitary landfill could be salvaged. There's a local women's group in your community that has made a commitment to build a women's shelter but lacks many of the building materials to follow through on their commitment. You get in touch with the women's group, they call the brick factory to arrange for the truck and send one of their members to the deconstruction site to keep the materials from being hauled away. While she is talking to the foreman of the crew that is tearing the building down, he offers his crew's help to dismantle the frame and other materials so they won't get damaged in the process. The owner of the building being torn down hears about the arrangement and realises she can claim a tax deduction for donating the materials for charity. She calls the head of the women's group and offers to donate the equivalent of the tax deduction to the group to help them construct the shelter. Now, that's networking.

Two qualities characterize the networking process: spontaneity and freedom. Spontaneity is the willingness of individuals to reach out at any time under almost any circumstance to help those in need. Freedom, on the other hand, is the will and the ability to take action, to redefine institutional and programme boundaries to help them be more responsive, and to share power, influence, and access to resources in a collaborative, non-threatening manner.

Enabling, good governance and other elected leadership competencies

As you probably realise by now, the enabling competency has the potential to respond to and energise many if not all the good governance principles. Enabling also cuts across the other competencies in this series with considerable frequency. Because of these inter-connections we have included a *reflective opportunity* at the end that is much more extensive than just reflection. It is designed to help you take an enabling experience your governing body and local government has been involved in and analyse it based on good governance principles and the other elected leadership competencies.

The potential dark side

This discussion has been so positive about the benefits that can accrue to you, your elected colleagues, your local government organisation, and local citizens that we hesitate to mention the potential for less than favourable consequences. And yet they exist. For example:

- ❏ Not all NGOs, private companies, neighbourhood associations, and others you might want to "enable" are worthy of enabling. There is always the potential that they will be incompetent, unable to do to do what you would like them to do, and on rare occasion, disreputable. In other words, don't partner indiscriminately. Check them out!

- ❏ Sometimes local governments dump public responsibilities on other organisations because they don't want to take the responsibility for whatever reason. This tends to happen more often with services for the poor, disadvantaged, minority groups, the disabled, women, and children. Now, we know this doesn't apply to your governing body but we thought you should know that the potential exists.

- ❏ Sometimes partners are selected for political reasons which may or may not have anything to do with their ability to deliver anything but voters on election day.

- ❏ Partners can make good corruption collaborators if this disease infects your local government.

- ❏ There's a tendency to stick with those partners who deliver on their responsibilities which often keeps new "enabling" partnerships from evolving.

- ❏ ....; This space is reserved for your favourite reason why you shouldn't get into the enabling business.

There is an old Spanish saying, *No es culpa del gallo sino del amarrador.* "The rooster is not to blame, but rather he who got him ready." Picking successful partners is more often than not in the preparation.

Trust

In the very beginning of this discussion we mentioned that enabling is based on two fundamental commitments: 1) fostering collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust, and 2) strengthening others by sharing power and discretion. We've provided many examples of how to fulfil the second commitment involving power and discretion but very little on the issue of trust as part of the first commitment. We believe that trust is

fundamental to building partnerships and effective elected leadership. Given its importance, there is no better way to conclude this enabling discussion.

Trust is another one of those words that represents a conceptual morass. While it is often used to describe the quality of relationships, trust also defies clear definition. For example, trust is defined in one dictionary as a verb, i.e., to believe, to expect, and in another as a noun, i.e., faith and confident belief. David Carnevale in his book *Trustworthy Government* says, "Trust is faith in people, their motivations, and their capacities," and yet, we often use the term when we talk about government. "I don't trust my government."

Trust in government, or the governing process, is not inevitable. In fact, it can be either nurtured or destroyed by the assumptions we make about the motives behind our government's actions or inactions. For example, your citizens' trust in your government is not just based on your explicit assurances that you govern by good governance principles. It is also based on all the implicit messages you, your elected colleagues, and all those who represent your government convey everyday by your collective behaviours.

Trust is reciprocal. Expressions of trust beget trust; distrust engenders distrust. Trust also lives by its own rule of physics. While it degenerates rapidly, it regenerates slowly. Autocratic governments assume that reciprocal trust is absent between the governing and the governed. Democratic self-governance, on the other hand, is based on reciprocal trust between those who govern and the governed. This reciprocal trust is fundamental to your ability to be effective as an individual elected official and the ability of your elected body to govern effectively.

Given these ominous thoughts about trust, how can you and your elected colleagues garner trust from your citizens and maintain it? Here are some clues.

❏ Trust your citizens. Since trust is reciprocal, this is the place to begin.

❏ Feel good about who you are as a governing body. Of course, this feeling of self-esteem builds from your collective accomplishments. Did you ever meet a corrupt politician who deep down felt good about himself and his accomplishments?

❏ Create shared visions with your diverse communities.

❏ Concentrate on what you do as a government body and how you do it. These are the task and relationship dimensions of leadership.

❏ Use your powers as a governing body to discourage dependency by your citizens. Nothing destroys trust like the misuse of power.

❏ Be consistent in your rhetoric and your actions. To put this in governance terms, be consistent in your policies, programmes, and services.

❑   Integrate your principles of good governance into a holistic approach to elected leadership.[89]

❑   ....; Add your favourite thought about how you can build and sustain trust with your citizens.

Unfortunately, politics is often associated with the lack of trust, and that lack of trust is intertwined with ethical issues and questions. Carnevale identifies two sets of actions that he associates with ethical, high-trust relationships and unethical, low-trust relationships.

Unethical, low-trust actions include: Machiavellian behaviour, engaging in the deliberate misuse of power; concealing intentions; insincerity; blaming others; personalising conflict; spreading rumours about others; harbouring grudges and acting on them; promoting zero-sum legitimacy, a "if I don't take it, I'll lose it" mentality; engaging in character assassination; and lying.

Ethical, high-trust actions include forming coalitions; avoiding petty disputes; keeping promises; appealing to ideals and values; telling the truth; being civil; being willing to accommodate, compromise and collaborate; keeping conflict functional; not personalising disputes; and allowing others to save face.[90]

There is no mystery about how to build trust. Nor is there any mystery in how to destroy it. The choice is yours.

The trust which we have in ourselves engenders
the greatest part of that we have in others.

LaRochefoucauld, 17th Century. French moralist

Accountability

Enabling, as we have been discussing it, inevitably involves giving up something as an elected body and local government organization. It might be: the loss of direct control over how a community based program is being managed by a private sector organization; or diminished flexibility in the delivery of a public program that is now under management by a coalition of NGOs. Sometimes entering into enabling relationships to achieve community goals that are unattainable through public means alone cuts at the heart of the political process. It's not easy to share responsibilities as an elected official, particularly if it feels like it is diminishing your political clout.

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[89] Carnevale, David, Trustworthy Government (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishing, 1995), pp.70-4.
[90] Carnevale, pp.104-1.

Trust, as we have just been discussing, is at the heart of enabling, collaborating, coalition-building endeavours. So is accountability. And, accountability cuts several ways. As a member of the local governing body, you are accountable to the people who elected you and accountable for the quality and the quantity of public services your local government delivers, even if the delivery is through a third party organization. And, that commitment to accountability must also be an integral part of any collaborative-enabling process. The last thing you want to do is enter into a mutual agreement with a community-based organization or private company for some kind of public service delivery if there is any doubt about their commitment to being held accountable.

Assuring that your local government doesn't forfeit its accountability to its citizens when entering into enabling ventures with organizations, groups, or even individuals, it is helpful to apply the following criteria.

First, establish to the extent possible a mutuality of enduring trust. We've discussed this at some length but it bears repeating as the foundation for building collaborative-enabling relationships.

Second, be clear about the goals and objectives to be pursued and the outputs and outcomes to be achieved. If all parties to the collaboration are not clear about what is to be accomplished, then it may be impossible to hold any party accountable for what happens.

Third, keep the lines of communications open. While uncluttered communication depends on many things, it is imperative to begin any collaborative-enabling process by agreeing on ground rules of engagement and defining mutual expectations.

Finally, determine who will be accountable for what with the recognition that the ultimate accountability for the delivery of public services is vested in those individuals who have been elected to represent and serve their constituents, the public.

Tony Benn, a British Labour Party politician who campaigned for changes in the hereditary privileges that marked that country's political process for centuries, would engage in the following inquiry whenever he met with someone in power:

> What power have you got? Where did you get it from? In whose interests do you exercise it? To whom are you accountable? How do we get rid of you?[91]

While these questions are rather strident, they are good reminders to elected officials everywhere about the responsibilities of public office and how these responsibilities relate to the issues of accountability. Nowhere are the issues of accountability more important than when the powers and responsibilities of elected officials are necessarily shared with others in the community in order to get things done.

Note: We have made a slight shift in the order of the text in the final part of this chapter. Instead of ending with Key Points, we have included what

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[91] Tony Benn, from a lecture he delivered at Nottingham, England on 18 June 1993, entitled "The Independent Mind."

we are calling a Reflective Task Opportunity. It's much like the previous reflective opportunities we have inserted from time to time with one very important difference. We provide a structured approach to assessing one of your civil society's partnerships against the principles of good governance and the other competencies in the series. You will find more about it in the task opportunity. We mention it here to remind you not to stop once you have read the key points.

Key points

❑   Enabling is providing the means for others to get things done.
❑   The enabling competency involves a wide range of options.
❑   There is a direct operational connection between enabling and civil society.
❑   Civil society in this context includes all non-governmental elements of society, not just NGOs and community-based organisations.
❑   Civil society is both an enabling ally for local governments and a counterbalance to help assure adherence to the principles and practice of good governance.
❑   One of the most effective enabling tools is to stimulate the flow of ideas and information from the bottom up as well as the top down.
❑   Public deliberation, study circles, and focus group dialogues are among the effective strategies for stimulating citizen-based information and ideas.
❑   Enabling involves shared decision making with civil society institutions and people from diverse communities.
❑   Forming partnerships with private sector firms, NGOs, neighbourhood organisations, and citizen groups are an integral part of the enabling competency and process.
❑   These partnerships can involve a variety of shared-power initiatives between local governments and civil society institutions and groups.
❑   These include project planning and development, capacity building, community interface, awareness building, advocacy, providing services, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and services, conflict resolution, and more.
❑   The enabling competency is important in fulfilling all aspects of the principles of good governance.
❑   Effective enabling involves the use of all other elected leadership competencies in this series.

- ❑ Delegating and the art of networking are also important enabling tools for elected leaders to consider.
- ❑ Enabling others also has a dark side, i.e., working with incompetent organisations, misusing civil society institutions for less than honourable reasons, and more.
- ❑ Trust is at the heart of all enabling ventures between local governments and civil society.
- ❑ Trust is strengthened when it is built on a clear understanding of who is accountable for what - with whom.
- ❑ The enabling competency when used wisely can assure good governance and support the development of civil society institutions.

A reflective task opportunity

This reflective experience is a bit different from those you have encountered in this series of learning opportunities. It is more task-oriented and provides a way to assess your most important enabling partnerships with civil society institutions, i.e. private firms, NGOs, neighbourhood associations, and others. In your reflections, we also want you to relate the partnership to the other competencies and the principles of good governance. We will provide a bit of structure to help you reflect on these variables.

1. Jot down the name and a short description of a partnership arrangement your elected body currently has with a civil society organisation for the purpose of providing a specific service to your constituents.

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2. Describe in a few words the type of service or programme activity the partnership is designed to accomplish.

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3. Is the partnership designed to relate to one or more of the good governance principles? For example, was it designed to reduce the cost of the service as an example of efficiency? Or to expand the service into more parts of the city as an example of effectiveness? After each principle are two check-off spaces. Check the first if this is the primary reason why the partnership was established. The second check-off space is to record if the partnership provides an incidental or unintentional response to this principle.

Principle	Primary reason	Incidental benefit
To encourage participation		
To be more responsive, e.g., timely		
To increase the quality (effectiveness)		
To improve the cost (efficiency)		
To achieve subsidiarity		
(Decentralise implementation)		
To promote equity		
To assure inclusiveness		
To increase accountability		

	Yes	No
Was the partnership established within the rule of law? If not, why not?		
Was the partnership decision process open and transparent? If not, why not?		
Has the partnership resulted in a more trusting relationship between the local government and citizens? In either case, why?		

Assuming this partnership represents the application of the elected leadership competency of *enabling,* check off the other competencies you believe were also involved in establishing the partnership. Provide a short description of how the competency was involved.

Competency	Yes	How?
1. Communicating		
2. Facilitating		
3. Using power		
4. Decision making		
5. Policy making		
6. Negotiating		
7. Financing		
8. Overseeing		
9. Institution building		

Were you surprised at how many principles the partnership responded to and the number of other competencies that were involved? Jot down your concluding thoughts.

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A small spark makes a great fire.

Panama proverb

Chapter 9:
The Negotiating Competency

Introduction

Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.

John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States of America

Negotiation is a process of deliberative interaction in which two or more parties with some disagreement or conflict seek to resolve their differences to their mutual satisfaction. When you work within your governing body to come to an agreement that satisfies all the various viewpoints and concerns represented by your members, you are engaged in principled negotiation. When various members of your governing body take irreconcilable stands on an issue and split the vote down party lines without regard for other points of view, that's "politics." In fact, that is nasty politics and rarely in the best interests of all your citizens. According to an old Swedish proverb, *whoever has taken the bear into the boat must cross over with it.*

On a more positive note, negotiation is at the heart of the democratic process and central to your roles and responsibilities as an elected official. There are always differences to be reconciled, whether they concern:

- ❑ the formulation of new public policies;
- ❑ annual budget deliberations;
- ❑ deciding what is fair and affordable compensation for the local government staff;
- ❑ changes in land-use designations;
- ❑ acquiring rights of way for new streets and utility easements;
- ❑ establishing affirmative action
- ❑ involving new NGOs in the delivery of human services; or
- ❑ entering into intergovernmental agreements to share the burden of a new public service that transcends political boundaries.

Just about every important decision you make as an elected man or woman involves some level of negotiation with your colleagues; your staff; other levels of government; civil society institutions like private businesses, NGOs, neighbourhood associations, professional societies; and collections of people from one to many.

What is negotiation?

Since negotiation is a popular subject it is easy to find lots of definitions of the process. While we opened this discussion with a definition, we want to quickly share a number of others before we delve more deeply into the nuances of effective negotiating. Note the overlapping similarities and the subtle differences in the various definitions. Negotiation, according to these authors, is:

"Direct talk among the parties to a conflict, conducted with the goal of achieving a solution." (Slaikeu and Hasson)

"The process by which we pursue the terms for getting what we want from people who want something from us." (Gavin Kennedy)

"Power and information used to affect behaviour within a 'web of tension'." (Herb Cohen)

"Back and forth communication designed to reach an agreement when you and the other side have some interests that are shared and others that are opposed." (Fisher and Ury)

From these snippets of rhetoric we can detect some similar themes.

❑ Negotiation involves an interdependent relationship between parties. If there is no interdependence, there is no need to negotiate.
❑ There is also a perceived disagreement or conflict that these interdependent parties want to resolve.
❑ It's a goal-oriented process. Those involved in negotiating expect results.
❑ Negotiation involves an exchange of something of substance for each party or the negotiation is not successful.
❑ Power, influence, and sources of information the other parties don't have are frequent visitors to the negotiating table.
❑ Nevertheless, all principled negotiations are based on hope and trust.

Two points for clarification

Before going any further, it is important to clarify two points that could get in the way of our discussions and your thinking about this competency. First, *while negotiation is a personal competency, it is also a profession.* Local governments, on occasion, employ professional negotiators to conduct the

process on their behalf. For example, professional negotiators are frequently employed by local governments to resolve labour-management disputes and to re-negotiate new labour contracts. While acknowledging the occasional use of the professional negotiator by your local government, we will be talking about *negotiating* as an important interpersonal competency that you and your elected colleagues can use to be more effective in your representation and leadership roles.

Second, the process of *negotiation is on occasion confused with mediation.* Mediation is a conflict-resolution process. Typically, mediators are brought into situations where the parties involved have staked out their positions and are unable to make progress toward decisions with which they can agree and tolerate. Mediation also involves a neutral third-party man or woman or persons to the conflict. The role of the mediator is to help resolve conflict in the best interests of all those involved in the mediation process. In this sense, the client is the conflict. Negotiators, on the other hand, are not neutral. They represent specific interests although hopefully they want the other party(s) to the negotiation to be satisfied with the results of the process. Both mediation and negotiation are time-honoured processes in the history of human interactions. Since mediation is covered in the *facilitating competency* chapter, we will focus our attention in this chapter on negotiation. First, let's look at why negotiation is such an important local government competency.

Negotiating and the governing process

Negotiation is an integral part of the political process, a process that involves reaching agreements on resource allocation, making decisions on who will do what within the governmental arena, and resolving disagreements among community groups. There is a fine line between conflict management and negotiation as elected-leadership competencies. Sometimes the conflict has to be resolved or at least modified, before the parties in conflict can get to the point where they are willing to negotiate an agreeable solution to their differences. If resolving conflict is more important than reaching an agreement acceptable to all concerned, you will want to rely on the mediating skills and tactics we proposed in the *Facilitating* competency. The process of managing conflict almost always involves a third party, someone outside the conflict who is asked to intervene on the part of both parties to help them resolve their differences. Negotiations also can involve third parties, but normally the process includes only those parties who want to come to an agreement.

Negotiating is an important skill within local governments for many reasons. First, local governments do not operate independently of other levels of government. Your organisation is constantly involved in negotiating the boundaries of power and authority with central government agencies, with

neighbouring units of local government, and with those quasi-governmental organisations that operate within your boundaries and carry out services and programmes that often overlap with those of local government. Secondly, the need for negotiating also can involve the most basic level of the governing process, that is, reaching agreement between a citizen and the representative of local government on a matter that may seem trivial to most but a great deal to those involved. Since the process is so pervasive, it is important that all members of the local-government "family" who have contact with the public or other levels of government be given opportunities to learn more about the basics of the negotiating process.

Negotiation is not a new idea or skill

In the first version of these chapters, we shared some thoughts about negotiating that were written nearly three hundred years ago. We thought they were interesting then and still do. They provide a historical look at a very contemporary topic and help to define the process we are talking about.

Barthelemy de Felice, a physics professor born in 1723 in Rome, wrote a thirteen-volume treatise on the art of negotiating. It was published at the same time his fifty-eight-volume work, the *Dictionnaire Universel Raisonne Des Connaissances Humaines*, was offered to the public. And that was all done without the benefit of a word processor! Many of de Felice's theories were innovative for his time, including the notion that good negotiators could be trained as well as born into the art. He described a wide range of situations in which the negotiator can use his or her skills.

> Negotiation is not limited to international affairs. It takes place everywhere where there are differences to conciliate, interests to placate, men to persuade, and purposes to accomplish. All life could be regarded as a continual negotiation. We always need to win friends, overcome enemies, correct unfortunate impressions, convince others of our views, and use all appropriate means to further our projects. There are some private matters which, by the confrontations of passion, the friction of characters, and the difference in the parties' way of thinking, become so embroiled that their successful resolution requires just as much art and skill as a treaty of peace between the greatest of powers. [92]

De Felice also had some encouraging words for the not-so-powerful of his day. They are encouraging to those of us who have few if any formal power sources at our disposal.

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[92] Barthelemy de Felice, "Negotiating, or the art of negotiating," translated from Dictionaire de justice naturelle et civile, in Zaltman, William, The 50% Solution (Garden City, NY., Anchor Books, 1976), p.47.

Some powers, with very mediocre forces, win support and rid themselves of the most troublesome difficulties. They owe their success to their prudence, to their care in accommodating themselves to conditions around them, to their sharp grasp of occasions favourable to their interests, and to a wise observation of the maxim that it is always best to submit to negotiations those things that one cannot contest by arms.[93]

Based on this short history lesson and a few opening thoughts about what the experts think negotiating is, it's time to reflect on how you use this competency in your everyday activities as an elected official.

A reflective opportunity

Take a few moments and think about how you personally have used your negotiation skills recently in your role as an elected official. For example, have you negotiated with your elected colleagues, members of the local government staff, and citizens or local groups?
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Now, jot down some examples of negotiations your elected body has been involved in recently in the conduct of official business.
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How have these negotiating processes differed? And how were they similar?
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What could you have done personally to have been more effective in these personal negotiation situations?
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[93] Ibid, p.48

And finally, what do you think your governing body could do to improve its negotiating competencies?

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It is good to be reminded that each of us has a different dream.

Proverb from the Crow, Native American tribe

The process of negotiation

One of the dilemmas we face in discussing negotiation is the wide range of situations in which we find ourselves "negotiating." The second is the cultural richness that defines the process of negotiation. If you have ever lived in a culture or visited one where it seems that everything is negotiable, you can appreciate the importance of this interpersonal competency and the variations that define it from one culture to another. To accept the first price put on a piece of merchandise in some parts of the world is almost an insult. It denies much of the enjoyment and verbal arm-wrestling that defines the psychological space between the buyer and the seller. In other cultures, the price listed is the price one is expected to pay. To haggle over it is equally inappropriate. So, what are you to do?

For one thing, we can acknowledge that the process of negotiation is often influenced by the culture within which it takes place. Even organisations have cultures and these cultures may affect your negotiating processes. For example, there are new research findings that indicate gender is an important factor in how negotiations are conducted. And there is growing recognition that many indigenous peoples have their own canvas that informs how negotiations are conducted. With these thoughts in mind, you will want to run what we say about negotiation through your own cultural filters. Those who write about negotiation come to the task with their own set of cultural biases. We will return later in the discussion to issues of culture and gender.

Another potential dilemma we face is the situational context of the negotiating. Negotiation is at times a scheduled formal event where the parties gather around the negotiating table guided by certain rules of engagement. More often, it is an informal process that cuts across many of your interpersonal actions as an elected official. Since the norms that guide your more formal negotiation sessions may vary from place to place, we don't plan to dwell on these to any extent. However, much of what we will say about

the processes and skills involved in negotiation can be applied to alter the way your local government negotiates contracts and other official relationships. With these caveats in mind, we urge you to not only think about how you can strengthen your own negotiating competencies as an elected official but also how the negotiating process is handled by your local government.

An inside look at the negotiating process

There are some characteristics that differentiate negotiation as a decision making process from those of legislation and adjudication. For example, there is a mixed-motive aspect to the process. Negotiating parties have both common and conflicting goals. If only conflicting goals were present, it would be impossible to negotiate. Once the parties have agreed to negotiate, they, at the very least, have that goal in common.

While it is in both parties' interest to reach agreement on an acceptable allocation of "things being valued," it is generally accepted that each party is interested in gaining as much as possible or giving up as little as necessary among those things that are valued. The negotiating process should result in as little lingering resentment as possible toward those sitting on the other side of the table.

Both parties win in the negotiating process. They see themselves as better off than they would be without negotiating, or they wouldn't come to an agreement. This doesn't deny that some parties to negotiation do come away feeling that they have been treated unfairly. In these kinds of negotiations, revenge often becomes the driving force when these parties sit down to negotiate the next time.

Given the potential for "getting-even," principled negotiators will want the other side to be satisfied with the results so agreements that have been made will be honoured. These "win-win" solutions are what the experts refer to as non-zero-sum situations. Win-win, non-zero-sum circumstances come about because there is more than a finite sum of things valued to be divided. Either there are things "on the table" that are valued differently by each participant in the negotiation, or new options can be generated as a result of the negotiations. For example, each side may give up less valued "goods" for those it values more, or barter away a portion of what it values to keep the rest. What each side is looking for is a "win-win' solution where each side considers itself better off as a result of the opportunity to negotiate.

We suspect you have had experiences in negotiating win-win solutions but may not have thought about them in these terms. To help clarify this concept, here is an example of a win-win situation.

A win-win example

Suppose your governing body wants to open a sanitary landfill operation to dispose of solid waste but it has no land available within the city limits. This means you must go outside the city to find a location, but you are aware that the surrounding rural governments are opposed to taking someone else's garbage! However, you are also aware that the citizens in one of the surrounding local governments have been petitioning their elected officials for better refuse service. This rural government has no organised refuse collection at this time. They also lack the technical staff to plan for establishing a sanitary landfill in their community. Your municipal engineer has informed you and your elected colleagues informally that one of the three sites he will be recommending for the landfill operation is located in this jurisdiction. To make a long story short, you and your colleagues have been able to acquire the site in exchange for expanding your refuse collection service into the neighbouring jurisdiction. Both sides agreed on standards for operating the landfill. These negotiated details helped overcome the residents' objections to its location, and they, in turn, received service from the city that their government was not prepared to make available at this time.

This is an example of a *win-win* approach to negotiation. Each side gets something of value from the process and the agreement. Everybody wins. The opposite of win-win is lose-lose. In the example we just related, a lose-lose situation would occur if the negotiating parties were negotiating from position not principles: *"We need your land"* and *"We don't want your garbage."* As a result, the negotiation degenerates into a shouting match with both sides withdrawing from the process in a fit of anger and recrimination.

A more likely conclusion to the negotiating process might be what is referred to as a win-lose solution. This is where one side to the negotiation wins and the other loses. Of course, it is almost always a bittersweet victory since the winner can be certain the loser will be lurking in the shadows just waiting to get revenge. Let's see what this might look like in the sanitary landfill scenario just presented. The city agrees to enter into negotiations with the rural neighbouring governing body and is successful in getting title to the land they want. However, in the end they put the price of collection service so high that the citizens in the rural community where the landfill is to be located can't afford it.

> *Blowing out the other person's candle won't*
> *make yours burn any brighter.*
>
> **Arabic proverb**

Stages in the negotiating process

More often than not, negotiation goes through certain predictable stages, whether buying a commodity in the marketplace when negotiation is expected, or coming to an agreement on a new piece of local government legislation when there are different special interests to reconcile. Ellen Raider and Susan Coleman who conduct skill training in collaborative negotiation define negotiation as a four-step process.

Step 1: **Ritual sharing:** This is the stage of checking each other out. What are some of the values and views that might influence the negotiation process? What's the climate for possible collaboration? In other words, with whom are we negotiating?

Step 2: **Defining the issues:** What are the initial positions, demands, requests, needs, interests, even accusations that have brought the parties together to negotiate?

Step 3: **Reframing and prioritising issues:** The parties in negotiation get past their positions or demands and agree on opportunities to help each other achieve gains from the process.

Step 4: **Problem solving and decision making.** This is the productive stage, what the parties came together to accomplish.[94]

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[94] Raider, Ellen and Susan Coleman, Collaborative Negotiation: Skills Training, (New Platz, NY. Ellen Raider International, 1992), pp. 2-7.

Design Learning, another organisation that offers training in managing conflict through negotiation, offers a more direct approach to the process.

1. Clearly state your wants.
2. Hear and understand the other's wants.
3. Identify areas of agreement and differences and acknowledge both.
4. Agree on solutions that meet as many of each other's needs as possible, the real negotiation stage.
5. After implementation of the agreement, review the results to see if they still meet each other's needs.[95]

Yes, but!

These approaches to negotiating sound great but we want to inject a note of reality and concern. Often citizens, particularly those from lower income areas, minority ethnic groups, and women, are at a disadvantage when it comes to negotiating with local governments. In other words, the processes we just outlined sound great in theory, but do they work this way in practice? Not always, and that's for a number of reasons. Sometimes local governments negotiate not from principles but from intimidation and expediency. There is a power differential between governments and those they represent. The old saying, "You can't fight city hall," was not invented as a clever title for a theatrical production. It was born out of reality. This power difference is a factor in many negotiations. At times, the negotiation process never takes place because people feel they have no chance of success if they do enter into negotiations with their local governments.

But even the poor and the powerless are not totally devoid of resources to negotiate on their terms. Sometimes they refuse to accept the definition of themselves that has been put forth by those in power. Such was the case a few years ago when a group of destitute families were faced with eviction from an old garbage incinerator in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The "urban renewal" policy of the national government at the time was to evict the poor from conditions like this, throw them and their few possessions into the streets, and demolish their makeshift homes. In this case, they were taking back the old city incinerator, the only home these 108 families knew.

The government at the time had a policy to reimburse such families with a small stipend to get them to agree to the eviction. When faced with eviction and no remuneration or eviction with at least some remuneration, the options were not great. Nevertheless, the families refused. They had redefined the government's negotiation process, which was essentially *take it*

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[95]   IBlock, Peter, Tony Petrella and Marvin Weisbord, *Managing Differences and Agreements* (Plainfield, NJ: Designed learning, 1995) pp. 122-3.

or leave it, by refusing to believe they were powerless. As Elizabeth Janeway said in her provocative book, *Powers of the Weak,* "the power to disbelieve is the first power of the weak."[96] The destitute dwellers in the old city incinerator had rejected the notion that they were powerless in a negotiation process that was based on *position* not *principles.* We will talk about this important distinction a bit later.

These dwellers sought out the help of the Committee for the Defense of Neighbourhood Rights who in turn recommended the support of the NGO, Ciudad Alternativa. Through the help of Ciudad Alternativa and months of confrontational negotiations, the families were assigned lots in a new government housing project and provided with building materials to build their own shelters.[97] Unfortunately, their assertive efforts did not translate immediately into enlightened policies by the government to treat other evicted citizens in a more humane manner. Nevertheless, these families won their battle through a long negotiated process.

If fate throws a knife at you, there are two ways
of catching it: By the blade or by the handle.

Proverb from Dominican Republic

Isn't that a great story? And sometimes we find a proverb from the country that fits the text perfectly. These destitute families caught the knife by the handle and turned a non-negotiable situation into a success story. Negotiation is not always a process of polite discussions based on agreed-upon principles. Sometimes it is a messy, confrontational, even dangerous process when the positions of those in opposition become frozen in rhetoric and raw power is used to force agreements. Since these approaches are not compatible with our notions of what the negotiating competency should encompass, we don't plan to advocate them. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that people have the potential power to rewrite the rules of negotiation when the process is based on position and not principles. Before we delve into these principles, we want you to take a moment or two and reflect on the case situation we just shared with you from the Dominican Republic.

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96 Janeway, Elizabeth, Powers of the Weak (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 157.

97 Caseres, Fran and Ada Polonio, "Pantajas, A Process of Negotiation and Self-construction for Community Development in the Dominican Republic," Building the City with the People (Mexico City, Habitat International Coalition, 1997), pp. 172-3.

A reflective opportunity

The story about the incinerator dwellers is rich in lessons we can learn about the negotiation competency. Reflect a bit about the potential lessons for elected officials in this short case study and jot them down.

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What lessons are there for citizens in terms of negotiating with their local government?

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How might you turn these lessons into policies and practices as a governing body?

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The value of principle is the number of things it will explain.

**Ralph Waldo Emerson,
19th Century American Essayist and Poet**

From position to *principled* negotiating

One of the more dominant themes in recent negotiating literature has to do with negotiating styles and strategies. Among these you will find considerable ink spilled on something called principled negotiation as contrasted with negotiating from "position." To tell us more about these two contrasting styles, we turn to Roger Fisher and William Ury. Their best selling book, *Getting to Yes,* continues to be the standard bearer for many who want to learn more about negotiating although they do have their critics. We will share with you some of the more critical views of the Fisher and Ury

approach to negotiation but not before we discuss what we believe to be the strengths of their approach to this competency.

According to Fisher and Ury, effective negotiating should:
❑ Produce a wise agreement if agreement is possible.
❑ Be efficient. Conserve everyone's resources, including time.
❑ Improve or at least not damage the relationship between the parties.[98]

The authors go on to define a wise agreement as one which "meets the legitimate interests of each side to the extent possible, resolves conflicting interests fairly, is durable, and takes community interests into account." Their basic approach to negotiating is rather simple but obviously successful based on the credibility they enjoy. It includes four basic steps:

Step 1: Separate the people from the problem.
Step 2: Focus on interests, not positions.
Step 3: Invent options for mutual gain.
Step 4: Insist on using objective criteria.

These four steps provide the basic method for negotiating that Fisher and Ury call a **principled approach.** This approach is "designed to produce wise outcomes efficiently and amicably." Let's look at the four steps in a bit more detail.

People: Negotiations often get sidetracked when people problems aren't separated from the substantive issues being bargained about. When negotiators start attacking each other rather than working side by side to solve the problems that brought them together in the first place, principled negotiations can become unprincipled fast!

Interests: We've mentioned this step before, but it's worth repeating. Don't go into negotiations with a stated position. Instead, you want to focus on your underlying interests, the benefits you want to gain through negotiating.

Options: Before you start to focus on the final agreement with those with whom you are negotiating, spend some time inventing options that will be mutually beneficial or that will meet your needs and the needs of the party across the table.

Criteria: Insist on basing your agreements on objective criteria. Without these standards or measures, the agreements tend to get fuzzier and less defined the further you get from the bargaining table. Objective criteria help you and others carry out the agreements you've made in a principled manner.[99]

To emphasise the differences between *position* and *principled* negotiation strategies, Fisher and Ury provide a side-by-side comparison of the two approaches that is helpful in understanding the two. Just to strengthen their case for the principled approach, they further divide the

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[98] Fisher, Roger and William Ury, Getting to Yes (Boston, MA. Houghton Mifflin, 1981), p. 11.
[99] Ibid, p.12

positional approach into two sub-approaches, what they call *soft* and *hard* positional bargaining or negotiating. While they convey rather graphic behavioural traits among the three types of negotiating styles, the author of the UN-HABITAT, et. al. manual on *Building Bridges Between Citizens and Local Governments through Managing Conflict and Differences* used a journey metaphor to describe the three styles. Since that approach to describing the three styles seemed to make the differences more easily understood, we are poaching them for inclusion in this chapter.

Three alternative negotiating trips

Fisher and Ury present three approaches to negotiating for comparison: two are based on *positional* bargaining, one which they call *soft* and the other *hard;* and one on their *principled* approach. The author of the Building Bridges manual on Managing Conflict and Differences described these three approaches as metaphorical journeys. The soft road to positional negotiating takes you down a sandy beach while the hard road takes you over a rocky hill. The principled approach, of course, decides to take *Principled Airlines.* The travellers are portrayed as those engaged in negotiation. Fasten your safety belts.

The soft road to a negotiated agreement

❑ **Travellers are friendly.** Everybody hugs before getting in the car.

❑ **The goal is agreement.** "Everybody agree? Great, let's go."

❑ Travellers make concessions to get along. "Mind if I ride on the fender?" "Naw."

❑ **They are soft on people and the problem.** "Sure, we can take your cousin's chickens to market. Just put them on the back seat."

❑ **They trust each other**. "I'm going to doze off. Let me know when we get there."

❑ **Travellers change positions easily.** "Let's go over that sand dune." "Great, let's go."

❑ **Offers are made.** "Want me to drive?"

❑ **Each side discloses their bottom line.** "I've got to get to Positional Bargaining (PB) by five this afternoon."

- ❑ **Travellers accept one-sided losses to reach agreement.** "I'd hoped that we could pick up my sister, but I reckon she can walk to PB."
- ❑ **They search for a single answer, one the others will accept.** "You want to go swimming? Fine."
- ❑ **Insist on agreement.** "Only if everyone agrees."
- ❑ **They try to avoid a contest of will.** "This okay with everyone?"
- ❑ **And they yield to pressure.** "Guess we better keep going."

It's a pleasant trip, but there's no *there* when they get there. The soft road to agreement takes its passengers nowhere.

The hard road to a negotiated agreement

- ❑ **Travellers are adversaries.** "Don't bore me with small talk like you usually do."
- ❑ **The goal is victory.** "Who cares if your mother is dying; I gotta get to PB by evening."
- ❑ **Demand concessions as a condition of travelling together.** "You drive."
- ❑ **Hard on the problem and the people.** "No more riders and no stopping for lunch."
- ❑ **Distrust.** "Give me that road map."
- ❑ **Positions are dug in.** "As far as I'm concerned, there is only one way to get to PB."
- ❑ **Threats are made.** "Stop at the next petrol station, or else…"
- ❑ **Misleading on the bottom line.** "Not really interested in when we get there."
- ❑ **Demand one-sided gains as the price of agreement.** "I know we talked about splitting the cost of petrol, but I've decided that you should pay."
- ❑ **Search for a single answer, one the other traveller will accept.** "Okay, you buy the petrol. I'll get the drinks and put air in the tires."
- ❑ **Insist on position.** "That's the road to PB, dummy."
- ❑ **Try to win a contest of will.** "This is the last time we travel together."
- ❑ **Apply pressure.** "Could you drive a little faster?"

Terrible trip, but they get there on time. The driver covered most of the costs and vowed never to offer that guy a ride again. And, the passenger said, "Who cares, I got what I wanted." However, the next time he needs to get to *Positional Bargaining,* you'll find him hanging around the bus station.

Forget the road. Take Principled Airlines

Fisher and Ury offer a better way to travel. It doesn't go to Positional Bargaining or even through it, but directly to Solution using Principled Airlines. Our mythical travellers have made other arrangements.

- ❏ **These travellers are problem solvers.** They realise it is cheaper and faster to go directly to Solution by air. They just haven't figured out at this point in time who will buy the tickets and what day they will travel.
- ❏ **The goal is a wise outcome that is reached efficiently and in a friendly manner.**
- ❏ **They separate the people from the problem.** "Let's not worry about my wife and your mother right now. Let's just complete our travel plans."
- ❏ **But they are soft on the people issue and hard on the problem.** "I'll take my wife out to dinner and you visit your mother in the hospital. We can still make the seven o'clock morning flight."
- ❏ **They proceed independent of trust.** They decide to buy their own tickets after they agreed on the flight.
- ❏ **The focus is on interest, not position.** While one traveller wanted to go by auto and the other by train, they quickly decided neither was the best way to travel.
- ❏ **Explored interests.** "Mind if I ride business class?"
- ❏ **Avoided the bottom-line syndrome.** "We leave on the seven o'clock flight or else."
- ❏ **Invent options for mutual gain.** "You can have my frequent flier miles if you'll take me to dinner at my favourite restaurant in Solution." "Great! I only need 500 more miles for a free ticket."
- ❏ **Insist on objective criteria.** "Let's keep the travel costs within each of our budgets and decide to leave no later than Monday morning to come home."

These travellers were very principled, reasonable, and open to options. They yielded to principle, not pressure, as they problem solved together. They invented new options for mutual gain, were clear about their mutual and separate needs and objectives to be achieved during the trip, and agreed upon the criteria for achieving them and determining the impact of each. [100]

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100 Building Bridges Through Managing Conflict and Differences (Nairobi, UN HABITAT, 2001), pp. 64-6.

A dissenting viewpoint

Alan Tidwell in *Conflict Resolved?* says popular books like *Getting To Yes* suffer from three shortcomings. They trivialise conflict, recommend routine methods for handling conflicts, and undervalue the role that the situation and context play in managing conflict. He makes the point that people in conflict are often very angry and motivated by extreme emotions, even hatred. He objects to these authors and others who write about conflict making light of the deep-seated anger that many feel in conflict situations. For example, such suggestions, as 'permit parties to ventilate emotions' and 'avoid reacting to emotional outbursts,' are in his view naïve.

Regarding his second point, Tidwell says "most worrisome of all is the emphasis on win-win outcomes, or simple agreements that generate mutual gain. While it may be easy for an outsider to invent solutions that provide mutual payoffs to two parties, the parties themselves may not see it that way." For example, he says it may be impossible to separate the problem from the person if the person is the problem. To focus on interests rather than position is no guarantee that matters may be made easier. In fact, they may get worse.

Finally, Tidwell believes popular texts like *Getting to Yes* undervalue the context and situation in conflict. He believes they rely upon persuasion to change views taking them from the challenge of understanding the real nature of the conflict. "After employing the popular methods of conflict resolution," Tidwell says, "some parties may become disheartened and instead opt for violence." [101].

A reflective opportunity

Given the point-counter-point exchange between Fisher and Ury, and Tidwell, take a few minutes and reflect on the principled approach to negotiation. Does it make sense for the types of negotiations that you and your local government colleagues encounter? Or does Tidwell's concern regarding these "popular" approaches to managing differences also concern you? Jot down your comments and seek out another elected colleague to share your thoughts with.

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[101]   Tidwell, Alan, Conflict Resolved? (London, Pinter, 1998), pp. 25-8.

Negotiating can be difficult

Since Tidwell alerted us to the possibility that negotiations may not be a stroll in the park, let's look at some tactics you might employ when working with difficult negotiating partners. By partners, we are talking about those on the other side of the negotiating table. We hesitate to use the word *adversary* since it conjures up we-they competitive relationships and most negotiation takes place in a spirit of collaboration. Nevertheless, we thought we would call your attention to the choice of words since we will now look at what to do if those you are negotiating with aren't in the partnering mood.

William Ury, the co-author of Getting to Yes, wrote a follow-up book which addresses some of the concerns of working with adversaries across the bargaining table that are difficult for whatever reason. He suggests a series of tactics that might be considered counterintuitive. In other words, they require us to do the opposite of what we think might work or how we might react when under attack. Rather than fighting back he recommends we try indirect actions. Encourage your adversary to reach within. Help this person to break through her own resistance barrier. It's the art of letting the other person have your way.

Ury lays out a five-step process for accomplishing this breakthrough negotiation strategy.

Step One: Don't react. Control your combative instincts. Take a moment to consider what your best alternative to a negotiated settlement might be. Buy time to think. Don't make on the spot decisions.

Step Two: Disarm your opponent. Metaphorically, of course, although we remember working with a local elected body in a remote rural area and a gun fell out of the mayor's briefcase. Ironically, they were involved in a team-building session. Help your opponent calm down. How? Dust off your finest communicating skill. Listen actively, paraphrase, acknowledge your opponent's feelings, agree when you can, and express your views in a non-confrontational manner.

Step Three:, Change the game. Try to move back to mutual interests, re-frame the issues, and ask problem-solving questions. Why is always appropriate as long as it isn't said in an accusatory tone of voice.

Step Four: Make it easy to say yes. Sun-tzu, the 4th century B.C. Chinese philosopher, must have been a masterful negotiator. One of his more memorable proverbial thoughts is - build your adversary a golden bridge to retreat across. Equally important to this discussion is this less known Sun-tzu strategy:

> Be extremely subtle, even to the point of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious, even to the point of soundlessness. Thereby you can be the director of your opponent's fate.

In less poetic fashion, you need to start from where your adversaries are, not from where you would like them to be. They may be overwhelmed, fearful of failure, or concerned about losing face with those they represent. As crazy as it might sound, help them deal with these unspoken concerns.

Step Five: **Make it hard to say no.** Help to get the negotiations back on track. Look at the consequences of walking away at this point and of failing. Fisher and Ury talk about the concept of BATNA, meaning the best alternative to a negotiated agreement. In other words, what would be your last offer? This may be the time to put it on the table.

> *It is difficult to beat a drum with a sickle.*
>
> **Hausa Sudanese proverb**

Prisoners' dilemma or tit-for-tat

Another way to deal with difficult negotiating situations is through a tactic called *tit-for-tat.* The approach has an interesting background so indulge us while we spin a tale of academic intrigue.

In the early 1980's, Professor Robert Axelrod posed a simple question to his colleagues who were exploring computerised decision-making programs. When should a person cooperate and when should a person be selfish at the expense of the other? To help answer this question he invited experts in game theory to submit computer programmes based on a scorable game called "Prisoner's Dilemma." The winner of that initial contest employed a strategy that became known as "tit-for-tat." We mention this for two reasons. The exercise is often used in workshops on negotiating skills, and you will find the exercise in **Volume 4,** Chapter 9 in case you or your trainers want to use it. Secondly, this bargaining exercise has become almost a cult-like phenomenon world-wide, and we suspect many of you have heard about it from other sources. If you have access to the internet, type in *prisoner's dilemma* to your search engine for a flood of articles about it from around the world.

Since tit for tat seems to be a very successful negotiating strategy, we would be remiss not to include it as an alternative for you to consider. It's based on cooperating or not cooperating in a series of exchanges between two parties. From the outcome of many rounds of this game where the tit-for-tat negotiating strategy won repeatedly, Axelrod and others came up with some guidelines for encouraging and sustaining cooperation in such settlings through a process of reciprocity.

1. *Be cooperative:* Start out by being cooperative and don't establish a tough bargaining stance at the outset.

2. *Be provocative:* If attacked, particularly in the beginning of negotiations, let it be known you will retaliate. Also make it clear that you prefer to cooperate, but only if you aren't attacked.

3. *Be forgiving*: If attacked, don't assume that you will always be under attack. Consider it a mistake on the other side. Try to re-establish trust even though this might be difficult.

4. *Be clear:* And be explicit regarding your intentions at each step in the negotiation process.[102]

It has been proven through the Axelrod et al research that the process of reciprocity in negotiating situations can be productive. It builds trust and encourages cooperation among those engaged in bilateral relationships. If you know you can expect others to react to uncooperative behaviour with like behaviour, you will think twice about being uncooperative. It's a message from across the table that they don't plan to be exploited without retaliating. It's an interesting approach to negotiating and the best way to appreciate the dynamics of this process is to ask your trainers to schedule a tit-for-tat simulation at your negotiating workshop.

> *Ashes fly back in the face of those who throw them.*
>
> **Yoruba proverb, West Africa**

Negotiating from the high ground

We want to throw in another perspective on this competency, one proposed by the organisation specialist Peter Block. In his book, *The Empowered Manager,* Block advocates the use of positive political skills to be more effective as a manager. It's an interesting choice of words since we are talking about elected leadership competencies. He puts the negotiation process into the context of building coalitions and support for your vision, whatever that might be. The critical variables in the negotiation process, according to Block, are agreement and trust. He defines the relationship between negotiators on these two factors and differentiates them according to whether the relationship is marked by high or low agreement and high or low trust. While these criteria correspond to those put forth by others who write about the negotiating competency, Block uses such rhetoric as *justice* and *integrity* to emphasize his approach to negotiation.[103]

Block elevates the importance of the negotiating competency to a much higher level than just negotiating everyday agreements. From the

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102 Susskind, Lawrence and Patrick Field, Dealing With an Angry Public (New York, The Free Press, 1996). P.228.

103 Block, Peter, The Empowered Manager (San Francisco, CA, Jossey Bass, 1987), p. 152.

perspective of this elected leadership series, his concerns would be focused on fulfilling the local government's mission through negotiating agreement and trust with a wide range of stakeholders within your domain. This process starts from within the governing body in your case, not when you sit down at the negotiating table. This means contracting among your colleagues to:

❑ Support the authority that comes from within your elected mandate to the people. Having a vision statement for your local government helps.

❑ Express yourself. Let your citizens know where you stand. There is nothing more refreshing in a negotiating situation than having elected men and women leaders who can speak with clarity and conviction.

❑ Commit the governing body to policies and actions reflecting those principles and strategies you expect from your local government staff and organisation.

Block sees these conditions as forming the foundation for negotiating with both your allies and adversaries within the complex domain of local governance. How you negotiate with these entities depends on two variables: agreement or disagreement on the overall vision of where you want your local government to be going; and whether or not there is trust between your local government and others on how to operate to pursue the vision.

How you manage the *agreement* and *trust* variables depends on the quality of the relationships. Block describes five different scenarios and strategies for managing each.

1. When working with those whom you consider **allies,** i.e., those who share your vision and concur with your strategies, you operate from the high-agreement/high-trust quadrant. You:

❑ Affirm agreement on the vision and specific tasks you plan to pursue.

❑ Reaffirm the quality of the relationship. Don't take the relationship for granted. Check it out.

❑ Acknowledge any doubts or vulnerabilities about the vision and tasks to be undertaken. Level with them on the status of adversaries and your own mistakes along the way.

❑ Ask for advice and support. Your allies can help you evaluate your perceptions of the conditions surrounding your relationship and provide information on where others stand in the community regarding your vision and goals.

2. When negotiating with **opponents** with whom you have an honest, high-trusting relationship but who disagree with your purpose, direction, or goals, Block suggests the following steps in the negotiating process.

❑ Reaffirm the quality of the relationship and the trust that makes it secure. What you need from them is the truth, and you can trust them to be honest.

❑ State your position. This means the vision and the purpose as well as the specifics of goals and strategies you plan to employ.

❑ State in a neutral way what you think their position is. You know they are opponents, and it's important at this point to understand their position. Seek out the areas of disagreement so they feel understood and acknowledged.

❑ Engage in problem solving to the extent possible recognising that these are not adversaries but simply people with a different position than you have. Your task is to embrace them and to gain and understand their divergent points of view.

3. When negotiating with those Block calls **bedfellows,** those who agree with you on how to proceed on a project or other joint venture but with whom you share a low level of trust, the negotiation strategy is as follows.

❑ Reaffirm any agreements you have with them. Acknowledge their support for the substance of the joint activities.

❑ Acknowledge the caution that exists in your relationship and the reservations you have about a relationship where there is a low level of trust between you. Acknowledge your own contributions to the difficulty of the relationship.

❑ Be clear about what you want from these bedfellow partners in working together. This may involve keeping you informed on what is happening and being upfront about any problems in working together.

❑ Ask them to do the same. What do they want from you in the working relationship? Seek out their disappointments and reservations about working together. Help them feel understood. This is a difficult relationship since it lacks trust but is worth working on.

❑ Try to reach agreement as to how you will work together. It occurs to us that this is often the type of relationship that exists in a highly politicised environment. It may be with those colleagues on the governing body who represent different political parties. In the battle to be elected, you have destroyed any semblance of trust among you.

4. The next category of negotiating partners is those Block calls **fence sitters.** They fall into the low trust and unknown agreement categories. They are those who simply won't take a stand on anything. They doubt, review everything endlessly, rely on rules and regulations, and deal in contingencies. Basically, they are bureaucrats. The strategy is to smoke them out, to find out where they stand if possible, and to encourage them to take a stand. This is not an easy set of tasks. Block suggests the following in negotiating with those who dwell on the fence.

❑ State your position, i.e. vision, goals, and purposes, i.e., where you plan to go in reference to the big picture and the programme details.

❑ Ask them where they stand. Encourage them to take a stand without imposing your judgement.

❑ Apply gentle pressure even though you can expect that they will want to collect more information, touch base with more colleagues, and do what good fence sitters do. Nurture them.

❑ Encourage them to think about the issue or whatever it is that you are negotiating with them about. Encourage them to let you know what it will take to get their support. Frankly, they don't deserve a lot of your energy, but they may help you understand any caution you might be feeling as you attempt to move ahead.

5. The final group of potential negotiating partners are your **adversaries.** These are those with whom you have both low agreement and low trust. These are those who fall into your relationships of last resort category. They have become adversaries only when your efforts to negotiate agreements and trust with them have failed. Most often, your adversaries have their vision, they are going to pursue it, and there is little you can do about it. The more you might try to convert them or win them over to your side, the more they dig in their heels. In negotiating with adversaries, Block has the following advice.

❑ State your vision. You want your adversaries to be clear about what you want to do and why.

❑ State in a neutral way your best understanding of their position. Communicate understanding, not agreement. This is hard to do, but it builds character.

❑ State your own contribution to the problem. It sounds a bit weird, and it won't win any support from your adversaries. To do otherwise can be manipulative. And, it might persuade those third-party bystanders to join you down the road.

❑ End the meeting with your plans and no demand. This represents a letting go of your adversaries, meaning you expect nothing from them. The good news: adversaries help you define who you are. [104]

We have spent considerable time outlining Peter Block's negotiating strategies for two reasons. We believe they reflect more accurately the kinds of negotiating situations that you find yourself in as an elected official. They also take you above the negotiating tactics that are so often found in the literature. Block's approach from the perspectives of agreement and trust is more strategic and more congruent with political leadership needs and expectations regarding this competency.

Wisdom is merely knowing what to do next.

South African proverb

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[104] Block, The Empowered Manager, Ch. 5, pp. 137-60. We have drawn heavily from Peter Block's well of wisdom. We appreciate his insights and indulgence in letting us poach so many good ideas for this chapter.

A reflective opportunity

Peter Block has provided us with many gems of wisdom regarding the negotiating opportunities you have as an elected leader. We suggest you spend a few moments reflecting on each of the five negotiating relationships from your experience as an elected official. In each of these jot down a few ideas to describe a situation in which you found yourself dealing with each type, what you or your governing body did in negotiating within the situation, and what you might have done differently.

Negotiating with an *ally:*

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Negotiating with an *opponent:*

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Negotiating with a *bedfellow:*

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Negotiating with a *fence sitter:*

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Negotiating with an *adversary:*

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Negotiation and culture

Alan Tidwell has written a provocative book that essentially trashes most contemporary approaches to conflict resolution including the negotiating competency we have been discussing. While his vitriolic rhetoric has merit, he is loathe to provide us with any tools he thinks are worthy of emulation. Nevertheless, he does provide some insight into the challenges of

transporting negotiation tools across cultural boundaries. As Tidwell points out, "One person's dysfunctional conflict is another's functional process. It depends largely upon the perspective, values, and beliefs of those in conflict. Equally, the functionality of the resolution process is largely dependent upon the values, beliefs, and perspectives of those involved." [105] In other words, it all depends on the context and the process.

On the one hand, one can overplay the importance of cultural differences and become somewhat immobilised. One of the authors was warned many years ago by his professional colleagues not to use experiential learning designs in Africa. "They want to be lectured to" was the admonition. To have heeded that misguided advice would have been folly. On the other hand, culture is an important factor in all human endeavours. Not to be sensitive to how processes like conflict resolution or negotiation relate to the cultural context within which one is functioning is, at the very least, arrogant.

Given these concerns, it is best for those who use these materials either as a learning facilitator or an elected official to think about their appropriateness in the culture where they are being used. Sometimes materials that seem to be inappropriate can be effective learning tools by casting the light of scrutiny on them and asking those ever important questions, *Why?* and *Why not?*

Kevin Avruch reminds us that *culture is not a homogenous, reified, uniformly distributed, single-level, customary 'trait list', timeless, or stable thing.* To "know" a person's culture, i.e., Malaysian, will not help you predict her behaviour unless you also know "all" her cultural infusions. For example, she might be an engineer, have been educated in Australia, be of mixed Indian and Chinese parentage, be a devout Muslim, et cetera, et cetera. In other words, you can't predict a person's behaviour unless you know that person as a person, in which case, you still might not predict her behaviour. Cultures are not timeless; they are invented by those who live them. Richard D'Andrade says "culture is socially inherited solutions to life's problems." On the other hand, an old Moroccan proverb reminds us, that "people resemble their times more than their parents." That's the nice thing about a discussion of culture; you can have it both ways.

The negotiation competency and gender

We want to conclude this discussion of the negotiating competency by focusing on gender as both an issue and an opportunity. Gender is an issue because a gender analysis demonstrates how men and women negotiate differently. It's an issue because many men believe that women are not very

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effective negotiators. These judgements are, of course, based on male standards of what constitutes effective negotiations. Unfortunately, these conventional-wisdom, male-oriented standards can be problematic when it comes to negotiating, particularly in the public domain. A gender perspective, on the other hand, presents an opportunity when it comes to those tough negotiating sessions. There is increasing evidence that women often model the kind of behaviour that contemporary schools of thought about negotiating promote as being most effective. Sounds a bit like a riddle, doesn't it. We'll explain.

> *The biggest mistake that women make is not to negotiate*
>
> **Jessica Miller, 20th Century American Investment Banker**

"Women just don't ask. They don't ask for raises and promotions and better job opportunities...for recognition for the good work they do...and they are much less likely than men to use negotiation to get what they want."[106] That's the way Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever start their thoroughly researched book on negotiation and the gender divide. They go on to say that negotiation has long been seen as a competitive process where men excelled and women felt less capable. But, as they point out, the norms for achieving success in the negotiating arena are changing. Rather than a battle between adversaries, negotiation is being seen as a collaborative process aimed at finding the optimum solutions for everyone involved.

These authors have interwoven two important issues that we believe are important to this discussion: gender differences and the impact these differences have on utilisation of the elected leadership negotiation competency; and the changing nature of the negotiation process. Let's look at the gender issues involved and then tie them into the competency of negotiation.

Researchers in trying to understand the differences in how men and women function particularly in situations where they compete for jobs, promotions, influence, et cetera, have discovered something called the "locus of control." It measures the extent to which individuals believe their behaviour influences their circumstances. The lower people score on the scale, the more they perceive their fate to be influenced by internal rather than external factors. In other words, those with an "internal locus of control" feel more confident that they can influence what happens. Those who score high, signifying an "external locus of control," feel much less confident that they have any control over what happens.

The consequences of this locus of control are significant in situations like negotiating. Those with an internal locus of control tend to undertake activities to advance their own interests. They are more likely to seek out information to help them advance their goals. As you can readily

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[106] Babcock, Linda and Sara Laschever, Women Don't Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2003), p. ix.

see, these are important negotiating skills. Extensive research in fourteen countries around the world demonstrated that women scored significantly higher on the locus of control scale than men. As Babcock and Laschever point out, "women are more likely to believe that their circumstances are controlled by others while men are more likely to believe that they can influence their circumstances and opportunities through their own actions."[107]

There may be a tendency by some to dismiss this research for its cultural bias, but the scope of the research is convincing. It included some countries where gender equality has long been a factor in public policies and programmes, i.e., Sweden and the Netherlands and others with varying track records on gender issues like Romania, the former U.S.S.R., China, India, Mexico, and Brazil.

From the perspective of this elected leadership series, there are opportunities to help women become more effective in all local government situations, not just in their use of the negotiating competency. For women elected officials, it is important to learn how to ask, remembering that the research shows that too many women just don't ask. When you don't ask, more often than not you are denied what those who do ask get. It is also important for women to learn how to be more effective negotiators. On this last point, there is good news not just for women but also for governing bodies that want to enhance their negotiating competencies as a collective body of decision makers and problem solvers.

There are always dual goals in the negotiating process—issue-related goals and relationship goals. If we can believe the research results just discussed, men are generally better in addressing the issue-related goals in the negotiation process while women are better at achieving the relationship goals. Given these differences, it makes sense to put together a mixed gender negotiating team when the negotiations involve the governing body or the local government. As the authors of Women Don't Ask state, "Women have some advantages that can help them outshine men at negotiating. Although the more aggressive approach favoured by many men can win good short-term results, women's focus on cooperation and relationship building can be a huge advantage."[108]

You have to have confidence in your ability,
and then to be tough enough to follow through.

Rosalynn Carter

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[107] Ibid, p. 23.
[108] Ibid, p. 165.

A reflective opportunity

We've been talking about an aspect of negotiation that may make some of you a bit uncomfortable. We suggest you jot down some thoughts about the issues of culture and gender as you see them having an impact on how your governing body should apply its negotiating responsibilities and competencies.

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What are some things you and your elected colleagues might do to strengthen your local government's negotiating competencies based on these thoughts?

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Negotiation is an important competency, not just for individual elected officials but for the governing body as a deliberative forum for the local government and its citizens. For example, it is common in many local government organizations to enter into formal negotiations to resolve labour-management conditions and differences. It is a complex competency to master, influenced by many factors including culture and gender. Mastering the negotiation competency will make you a stronger and more effective local elected leader.

Let them who know the instrument play upon it.

Key points

- ❑ Negotiation is a process of deliberative interaction in which two or more parties with some disagreement or conflict seek to resolve their differences to their mutual satisfaction.
- ❑ Negotiation is both a personal and professional competency.
- ❑ Negotiation should not be confused with mediation; mediation is a third party approach to resolving differences.
- ❑ Negotiation is an integral part of the governing process.
- ❑ Negotiation as a way for human beings to decide who gets what from whom is an ancient art involving interpersonal skills and the use of various forms of power.
- ❑ The negotiating process is influenced by the cultural context of the environment where it happens.

- ❏ Negotiation can be a formal process or a part of everyone's daily routine to survive.
- ❏ The win-win approach to negotiating takes the process from competition to collaboration.
- ❏ One school defines the negotiation steps as ritual sharing, issue definition, issue reframing, and decision making.
- ❏ Position bargaining has been overtaken by principled negotiation.
- ❏ Principled negotiation is "designed to produce wise outcomes efficiently and amicably."
- ❏ Its mantra is, separate the people from the problem; focus on interests, not positions; invent options for mutual gain; and insist on objective criteria.
- ❏ Some critics think principled negotiation is simplistic and doesn't travel well across cultural borders.
- ❏ Negotiation can be difficult.
- ❏ Tit-for-tat, a reciprocal process of mimicking your adversary, is another way to negotiate.
- ❏ Negotiation built on agreement and trust as defined by Peter Block is also another way to negotiate. Check it out.
- ❏ The negotiation process is gender sensitive. Women bring natural instincts and skills to the negotiating tables thus supporting the new paradigm of collaborative resolution of differences.

Chapter 10:
The Financing
Competency

Introduction

*Every time the government attempts to handle
our affairs, it costs more and the results are
worse than if we had handled them ourselves.*

Benjamin Constant, 19th Century French writer and politician

Unfortunately, this accusation by the 18th century French writer and politician Benjamin Constant de Rebecque has a contemporary ring to it. All governments are accused of wasting their taxpayers' money and often the charges are legitimate. On the other hand, governments are in the business of providing to their citizens a wide range of goods and services on which it is often hard to put a monetary value. While governments should be business-like in their financial transactions, they shouldn't be run like a business. As Herbert Lehman, Governor of the Sate of New York in the early 1900's, said, "You can't run a government solely on a business-like basis....Government should be human. It should have heart."

Balancing business-like behaviour with compassion and foresight is one of the most challenging aspects of your elected leadership roles and responsibilities. That's why competencies in providing fiscal leadership are so important and also so complicated. When the Expert Group Meeting was convened in Nairobi to consider changes that should be made in this new edition of the Elected Leadership Training Series, there was considerable discussion about what to call this role. The previous *Financier* label was deemed inadequate. It sounded too much like the banker on Main Street. *Finance manager* was suggested, but it's too much like the role of those who manage the day-to-day fiscal transactions for your local government. Financial mobiliser was also considered but seen as too limiting. While you and your governing body have the responsibility to mobilise funds for your local government, it is only one among many financing obligations that go with the elected leadership territory. Given the challenge that even naming this important competency has created for us, we think the best way to open this discussion is to give you an opportunity to describe the financing competencies from your perspective and experience as an elected official.

A reflective o\pportunity

What are the things you need to know to carry out your financing responsibilities as a local elected official? In other words, what are the *knowledge factors* associated with the financial competencies of an effective local elected official?

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   What are some of the *most important skills* that are associated with your financing roles and responsibilities as an elected official?

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   Finally, what kinds of *attitudes and values* should you bring to your financing roles and responsibilities as an elected official? This is a bit more complicated to state in a few words but equally important.

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Defining the financing competency

In the introduction chapter, we defined the *financing* competency as making decisions about raising, allocating, and expending public funds. We also said that financing is one of the most traditional competencies that local elected officials are expected to have and use in their local leadership role. At the heart of this competency is the ability to understand and bring leadership to the annual budgeting process. This is the time when you and your elected colleagues decide what is important to your community and how many resources you are prepared to allocate to these priorities. Passing the annual budget is probably the single most time-consuming task you undertake during the year. It may also be the most frustrating for the following reasons and more.

- ❑ There are never enough resources to meet the perceived and desired needs of your local government and its citizens.
- ❑ The needs, preferences, and, not least of all, the ability of men and women to pay for the services your local government provides are very diverse.
- ❑ Any attempt to plan and evaluate each of these service needs in relation to every other is impossible.
- ❑ Higher levels of government often put demands and constraints on the decisions you make at the local level which, for better or worse, affect your freedom to decide what is best for your constituents.

❑ It is often difficult to balance long-term community needs with short-term citizen demands particularly during an election year.

❑ There is neither time nor resources to research the costs and benefits of various alternatives to some of the more complex and costly public programmes you provide.

❑ Balancing your own views about what needs to be done in your community with the views of your elected colleagues and professional staff is always difficult.

❑ Just when you and your elected colleagues finally agree on the direction you want to take in the budget process, some unforeseen disaster strikes, i.e. the political climate in the country changes, a natural disaster strikes your community that requires a sudden shift of fiscal resources, or a scandal emerges out of nowhere that involves your best laid plans and one of your key budget advocates.

The challenge in part is to turn the budget process from being a zero-sum game where the financial goods at your disposal are finite into a collaborative venture that unlocks resources beyond your fiscal borders. We will talk about these opportunities later.

But there's much more to this part of your elected leadership role than just preparing and enacting the annual budget. The *financing* competency also involves knowledge about and skills in short-term and long-range financial planning; exploring cost-sharing opportunities with other local governments, citizens, and the private/NGO sectors of the community; assuring that performance reviews of major revenue and expenditure categories are conducted periodically and professionally; tracking various trends that could have major impact on the financial health of your local government and community; assuring openness and transparency in all financial matters; and leveraging public assets to foster economic development.

As we said in the beginning of this discussion, the *financing* competencies required of the local elected men and women are diverse, complex, and important. Before we delve too deeply into any one aspect of these competencies, let's look at them in relation to the generally accepted principles of good governance.

Financing competencies and good governance

We just mentioned the good governance principles of openness and transparency in relationship to the financing competency. When it comes to the elected stewardship of local finances, these may be the first qualities that come to mind. When the financial decisions and transactions of public

institutions become *closed* and *cloudy*, it's time to start worrying. And increasingly, these principles apply to other institutions as well. The global concerns about widespread corruption in prominent private corporations, religious institutions, and non-governmental organisations have reinforced the importance of these principles as they relate to the fiduciary responsibilities of all leaders, not just those in public office. Consider this global attention as an asset when trying to bring greater openness and transparency to your local government's finances.

It goes without saying that your financing competencies should be grounded in the good governance principles of openness and transparency. While these two fundamental principles don't diminish the value of the other benchmarks of expected elected leadership behaviour, they provide the standard by which all others will be judged. Let's look at the other good governance principles as they relate to the financing competency.

❑ **Respect for the rule of law**: All public financial transactions must be lawful. It matters not whether they are related to the annual budget process, involve collaboration with other institutions as a means of service delivery, or fall into the "creative" category of financial tactics, they must adhere to the rule of law. There should be no variations from this principle.

❑ **Sustainability:** This principle cuts to the heart of both short-term and long-range fiscal planning. For example, don't fund programmes that can't be continued for their intended life. Don't buy equipment or build facilities that you can't maintain. Sustainability also has its limitations as a guiding principle. Don't continue programmes or services that have outlived their usefulness. *Sustainability* does not mean *forever.*

❑ **Equity and inclusiveness:** There are very few governance principles that have their credibility tested more thoroughly than these two when it comes to budgetary decision making. Have you considered the needs of all your citizens in the location of public facilities, the budgeting for new employees, the allocation of maintenance funds, and the enforcement of policies and laws?

As elected men and women, you have substantial clout to change existing community norms and values through the allocation of public resources. The criteria just mentioned and others need to be built into your budgeting process. There is no better time to ask department heads the following kinds of questions than during their budget defences.

- How many of the new patrol officers in the proposed police budget will be women?
- Does the request for library operating funds assure that the low income areas of the city will be getting equitable service?

- Are the service fees for water consumption putting undue burden on single family homeowners while rewarding big businesses?
- Has the hospital changed its unwritten policy of turning away migrant workers who need medical assistance?
- Will businesses that are owned by ethnic minorities be given equal opportunities to bid on local government contracts?

Budget time is an opportunity to re-evaluate the way your public funds are used to assure that equity and inclusiveness are integral to the *planning* and implementation of all programmes and services.

❑ **Effectiveness and efficiency:** These principles are central to the *financing* competency and probably the terms you will hear most often from your managers in their efforts to defend their budget requests. We have described these terms in other chapters in the following manner. *Effectiveness* is doing the *right* things. *Efficiency* is doing things right. Is your local government being effective in providing the kinds of programmes and services that are required and wanted by your citizens? Are you using *efficiency* measures to get the most value for your public expenditures? Effectiveness is determined largely by external forces and guided by rigorous planning processes. Efficiency is more internally driven and dependent on the quality and work of your management and operating teams.

❑ **Accountability:** This principle is also at the heart of the financing competency. Citizens expect their elected officials to be fiscally accountable. Nothing gets the ire of citizens more than the misuse of public funds. Part of this principle is embedded in the financial systems that are designed to provide oversight and, yes, accountability. We will be discussing these in more depth in the *Overseeing* competency chapter.

❑ **Subsidiarity:** Since subsidiarity in most cases involves the devolution of authority and resources to lower levels of implementation, it has direct financial implications. For example, will neighbourhood policing units that operate semi-independently of central command be able to deliver improved service at a lower cost? Can certain human services be contracted out to local NGOs? While the principle of subsidiarity has financing implications, it is also associated with the *enabling* and *institution building* competencies.

❑ **Participation:** There was a time not long ago when citizen participation was rarely an issue in public budget discussions, but no more. Citizens are demanding more involvement in the

planning and allocation of **their** resources and elected officials are seeing the wisdom of involving them. One city in Brazil has gained global notoriety with its participatory budgeting process. We will highlight this city's successes later as we look at various ways to increase citizen participation in the budgeting process.

We will be exploring in more depth how many of these principles can be made operational through the use of your *financing* competencies. Before doing so we want to look at the connections between the financing competency and the other elected leadership competencies in this series.

> *Leadership is the capacity to exploit connections*
> *that others rarely see.*
>
> **Floradale proverb**

Financing

Financing and other competencies

The financing competency has some very strong ties to several other competencies in this series. The *overseeing* competency is obvious. While it involves much more than just finances, overseeing is most often associated with financial concerns. Your financial ability to allocate scarce resources is perhaps your most important use of your *legitimate power.* While using your financing competencies, you also tap into your power competencies of expertise and connections.

The *policy-making* and *decision- making* competencies are also key to your ability to use the financing competencies effectively. Many of the financing decisions that elected officials make are either backed by policy statements or require formal policies to assure their legitimacy. As for *enabling* others in the community to share in the governance process, your financing competencies are often the most important tool at your command. And *negotiating* is always a vital part of the budgeting process. While many of the connections between the various competencies explored in this series are obvious, it's important to see how they complement each other. It's when you apply these many competencies in unison that you begin to realize their ability to transform elected men and women into elected leaders.

The budget!

Balancing the budget is like going to heaven. Everyone wants to do it, but nobody wants to do what you have to do to get there.

Phil Gramm, elected official 20th C American Senator

If there is one single thing that defines the financing responsibilities of elected officials and the competencies required to carry them out, it's the annual budget process. While your duties and responsibilities as a local elected official are numerous, the enactment of the annual budget is undoubtedly the most time consuming. In a series of Elected Official Chapters, published by the International City-County Management Association, the authors call the budget process the governing body's "single most important activity of the year."

> It is where all the elected officials who serve the local government must work together for a common outcome; it is where decisions are made to determine which programmes are funded; it is where the working policies of the local government are set forth; it is the management blueprint for department heads to use in providing services; it is the standard for defining future performance; and it communicates your goals and decisions to many groups, including your constituents, the business community, outside vendors, and credit rating agencies.[109]

In spite of its importance and its ability to consume your time, the budgeting process is often flawed. This may explain why there are so many schools of thought about what budgeting system to use in guiding the *effective, efficient, inclusive, equitable, transparent, accountable* and *participatory* use of your public's monetary resources. For example, over the past several decades local governments have been advised to go from a simple line-item budgeting to a sequence of financial planning and executing strategies that have included programme budgeting, performance budgeting, zero-based budgeting, target-based budgeting, mission-driven budgeting, expenditure-control budgeting, and, most recently, participatory budgeting.

And sometimes these nomenclatures are fused to form new strategies. Expenditure- control budgeting, for example, joined forces with participatory budgeting to become *civic engagements in public expenditure management.* We agree that *civic engagement* is an improvement over *participatory and management* sounds much better than *control.* As you can imagine, each school has had its advocates and distracters over these many decades of budgetary iteration. You can also be fairly confident that the

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[109] Valente, Maureen, "Budgeting" Elected Officials Chapters, Setting Policies for Internal Management 3rd edition, Number 4 (Washington, International City Management Association, 1988) p.42.

names given to these fiscal processes will evolve into something else by the time this chapter reaches your neighbourhood.

While we plan to focus on the latest school of budgetary planning and management, i.e., civic engagements in public expenditure management, we think it's important to provide a short historical roadmap that shows how these systems have evolved over time. We will start with the rudimentary line item budget since it is still used in many local governments around the world.

The line-item budgeting process was invented largely to control the spending urges of public managers and bureaucrats. It was designed to hem them in so they can't spend one euro, shilling, or rupee more than their governing body approved for each item. Since it is also difficult to shift money around from one line-item account to another to meet emergent and unexpected needs, the manager is constrained from making sound financial moves. The system that was created to prevent bad management has often made good governance impossible.

Recognising the limitations of the line-item approach to public budgeting, other approaches evolved. First, there was the programme budget. It allocates money to functions or activities, such as road maintenance, police services, and slum upgrading, rather than specific items or costs. A programme budget is usually backed up by a line item budget, as most of these systems are, but it does show the functions for which funds will be spent. Two problems with this approach are (a) the time it takes to plan and implement it and (b) the absence of defined levels of service or "performance" to be achieved.

This last problem was presumably solved with the invention of the performance budget. This type of budget is patterned after the programme budget but goes one step further to show the relationship between money to be spent and services to be provided. Managers are required to define the outputs or workloads of their units, e.g., number of kilometres of streets to be swept and cost per kilometre. This is a difficult exercise, particularly when applying it to some of the staff and social service areas of operation.

Zero-based budgeting, as you can detect from the title, strips each programme's budget down to the essentials each year and provides the elected body with an opportunity to allocate the remaining funds to discretionary programmes and projects. While it sounds good in theory, this approach never gained momentum. It remains largely an alternative for professors to ruminate about.

The zero-based experiment was overtaken by target-based and mission-driven budgeting. Essentially, they provide each service or cost centre with a lump sum for operating expenses thus giving the manager more autonomy to manage the fiscal resources based on changing circumstances. As you can imagine, this approach requires a lot of trust between the policy makers and those who are charged with managing the public funds at the department and programme level. The old adage *trust me* doesn't always define the relationships between elected officials and their public managers.

In reality, local governments around the world operate with a myriad of different approaches to budgeting. In many local governments, you

can find a mix of approaches based on the skills and needs of those who are charged with fiscal management. We have taken you on this historical tour of budget approaches not to bore you but to raise your awareness about some of the concerns that have prompted the evolution of public budgeting systems.

What all these systems lacked, at least in their raw and explicit forms, was a process to share fiscal decision making with citizens. While many local government budgeting systems require public hearings and postings of the proposed budgets for review by citizens, these processes fall short of involving them in actual decision making. Given world-wide attention to good governance principles and the promotion of greater citizen involvement in public decision making, it was inevitable that new fiscal management systems would evolve. The latest iteration of budgeting systems, designed to catch the winds of democratic change, is referred to as *participatory public expenditure management* (PPEM) or *civic engagements in public expenditure management* depending on whose label you want to use.

Barring a sudden shift to the participatory expenditure management approach in your local jurisdiction or some other financial management approach, it is important for you and your elected colleagues to ask some fundamental questions about the way your budgeting process is managed. For starters, we suggest the following:

1. Are you, your elected colleagues, the local government staff, and citizens getting the kinds of timely information and data needed to make enlightened decisions about the allocation and management of your local government's fiscal resources?

2. Does the process assure an open, transparent, and participatory process of fiscal management and development?

3. Are you exploring alternative ways to deliver local programmes and services that would be more cost effective while improving the level of service to all the diverse citizens of your municipality?

4. Has your local government optimized its potential for revenue generation and cost containment? Most if not all local governments around the world are bound by requirements to balance their budgets on a yearly basis. Public expenditure management is just half of this yearly balancing act between income and outflow.

A closer look at civic engagements in public expenditure management

> *The job of a citizen is to keep his mouth open.*
>
> **Gunter Grass, 20th Century German author**

While the German author Gunter Grass might be accused of gender insensitivity in his remark about the job of citizens, his admonition is right on target. Citizen involvement in the budget process is not only giving them a voice in making budget decisions, it is also an encouraging trend in local governments worldwide. In a discussion paper published by the Participatory Group, Social Development Group, in the World Bank, the author says, "Participatory public expenditure management (PPEM) is fast becoming the standard practice in public finance. It is turning out to be an effective element in good governance advocacy because it promotes a surgical approach to examining government spending and performance."[110] PPEM deserves our attention not because it might become the world's public finance standard but because of its focus on civic engagement. Let's take a closer look at PPEM.

The World Bank describes PPEM as a cyclical process that begins with the *formulation of the budget* where citizens participate in actual allocation of public resources or formulate an alternative budget followed by *budget analysis* where allocations are assessed against various ongoing and proposed programme, infrastructure and human resource commitments which leads to the *formal adoption* of the budget by the governing body. At this point, the budget begins its implementation phase where PPEM provides the opportunity for citizens to oversee *budget expenditures.* The final stage of PPEM is *performance monitoring* to assure that the expenditures delivered on their promises.

The only significant difference in PPEM when compared with some of the budgeting systems mentioned earlier seems to be its emphasis on *civic engagements* as an integral part of the process. When we take away the participatory focus, the first P, we are left with the management of expenditures. From our perspective this tends to short change many of the *financing* competencies that you and your elected colleagues need to be concerned with in providing leadership to the management of your fiscal resources. For example, managing public revenues is equally important as a budgeting responsibility. The opportunity to expend funds is dependent on generating them. We will be exploring these other aspects of your financing roles and responsibilities but first a look as the participatory aspects of budgeting which we believe is the most important component of PPEM. Our review takes us to Porto Alegre, Brazil, as well as Dayton, Ohio, for two quite different models for engaging citizens in the budgeting process.

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[110] Songco, Danilo A. Accountability to the Poor: Experiences in Civic Engagements in Expenditure Management, (Washington, The Participatory Group, Social Development Department, The World Bank, 2003), p.1.

The Porto Alegre, Brazil model

Participatory budgeting, as introduced in 1989 by the city government of Porto Alegre, Brazil, has become an international phenomenon in the annals of local self governance. For example, two Latin American mayors met with African mayors in Yaounde, Cameroon in late 2003 to discuss the experiences of more than 250 local authorities in Latin America that have installed the participatory budgeting process. Before the meeting ended, "some of the 700 African mayors signed letters of intent with the two Latin American mayors to start introducing the home-grown Brazilian municipal administrative system of participatory budgeting."[111]

Before you as a local elected official get too excited about the Porto Alegre experience, it is important to understand the legal context within which participatory budgeting (PB) takes place in Brazil. The local elected legislative bodies in Brazil have virtually no powers to influence policy making or the distribution of financial resources. These powers and responsibilities are vested overwhelmingly in the office of the elected mayor. While citizens are valuable contributors to budget decisions in Porto Alegre, the PB process is not without controversy. According to Brian Wampler in *A Guide to Participatory Budgeting,* "PB programs in Brazil, at local and state levels, have been rejected by social movements and NGOs due to the government's interference." [112]

This is not to downplay the importance of this process but to recognise that there is no precise PB model that will fit all local governments. Public finance management systems need to be structured to the political, social, and economic environment of each local government. They must also adhere to the legal and administrative mechanisms that define your own local government operations. In spite of these concerns, the Porto Alegre PB model is worthy of consideration because of its commitment to citizen involvement. The process is a bit complicated so bear with us as we try to describe its essential characteristics.

The city of 1.3 million people is divided into sixteen regions to facilitate the budget dialogues. The citizen consultations involve five themes: transportation; education, leisure and culture; health and social welfare; economic development and taxation, and city organisation and urban development. There are two rounds of plenary assemblies in each region on all of the five themes, one in April and the second in June. Before these deliberations begin, informal citizen gatherings are held to collect ideas and demands for inclusion in the following year's budget. City officials are not involved in these initial discussions.

This first round of plenary assemblies with the mayor and staff are to review investment plans for the previous year, discuss new proposals, and

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[111] From a United Nations news release of 8 December 2003 posted on the allAfrica.com web site.

[112] Wampler, Brian, A Guide to Participatory Budgeting, October 2000 (World Bank website: www.worldbank.org/wbiep/decentralization/Topic13.7.htm) This is one of the more insightful discussions of PB we have found. We recommend you download the entire article if you want to know more about the details of this process.

elect those who will represent the district in subsequent meetings. Between these meetings and the second round, informal meetings are held with various groups and individuals to get further input into the proposed budget plan. They are given opportunities to rank order their priorities based on such criteria as the amount of access they have to specific services and population. During the second round of meetings, a forty-four member Council of Participatory Budgeting (COP) is elected representing regions, themes, civil service unions, and an umbrella organisation of neighbourhood communities. This Council then takes responsibility for representing the needs of the citizens as developed through the previous consultations. For the next three months they work with the mayor and staff to develop the budget that is approved by the COP before going before the city legislature for final adoption.[113]

This participatory budgeting process, according to Wampler, has had a number of positive benefits for Porto Alegre and other local governments that have adopted the general PB format.

❑ They build a citizen base of support for budget decisions and subvert the potential for cronyism where public programmes and services are parcelled out behind closed doors. On the other hand, the citizen's dependence on the mayor's office may create a new form of clientelism.

❑ The rules of PB generally favour the distribution of goods and resources to low-income neighbourhoods where the needs are the greatest.

❑ The citizen mobilisation that is required to put together a PB has educational side benefits that may influence the political and social consciousness of citizens.

❑ Finally, the process encourages openness and transparency with expectations that it will reduce corruption and governmental inefficiencies.

Wampler suggests that local governments interested in implementing a PB process should consider the following issues:

❑ Is there sufficient discretionary funding to allow citizens to select specific public works? If not, the process can raise unrealistic hopes among citizens that they will be able to influence the decision process within their local governments.

❑ Can PB programmes be used to increase tax collection? Higher expectations about what your government can do to provide new programmes and services will ultimately require new revenues or cost containment on existing programmes and services.

❑ Is your government prepared to delegate authority to citizens?

❑ Will PB programmes subvert traditional patronage networks? If so, is this something you want to do or are able to do without paying the ultimate price at election time?

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[113] Case Study 2: Porto Alegre, Brazil Participatory Approaches in Budgeting and Public Expenditure Management, (Washington, The Participation Group, Social Development Department, The World Bank.)

❑ Can PB help your local government establish new bases of
political support for your policies, programmes, and services? [114]

In other words, your local government must have the political
flexibility to engage residents in this kind of intensive policy and planning
dialogue, the resources and capacity to reform the implementation processes
now in place, and financial flexibility and independence to engage in a
resource allocation and planning process that is citizen based.

The Dayton, Ohio, priority board system

Dayton, Ohio, is a medium sized industrial city in the United States that has
also implemented a successful participatory governing process that
encompasses citizen involvement in the allocation and management of fiscal
resources. The city's sixty-five neighbourhoods are represented by seven
Priority Boards that provide the city government with representative
indications of the needs and priorities of neighbourhoods as well as an
assessment of service effectiveness. These Priority Boards, in existence since
1975, enable citizens to be involved in policy decisions and other actions that
affect their neighbourhoods. This involvement ranges from budget
recommendations to suggestions of new programmes and capital projects
and from zoning decisions to issuing certain types of business permits.
In essence, the Priority Boards are the middle tier of a three tier
governance process that links neighbourhoods with the city governing body
and administration. While the city-wide elected governing body has ultimate
responsibility for public policy decisions, they rely heavily on the
neighbourhood groups to identify and prioritise needs, goals, and objectives
through the yearly budgeting process. The effectiveness of the Priority Board
process of citizen engagement has been strengthened through a range of
mechanisms from grassroots leadership development programmes to the
establishment of neighbourhood economic development corporations. [115]

Two models and many variations

The Porto Alegre and Dayton experiences with civic engagement in the
budgeting process are two dramatic models of bottom-up decision making in
the allocation and monitoring of fiscal resources. Perhaps the biggest

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[114] Wampler, p.28.

[115] To learn more about Dayton's Priority Boards log on to their website: www.cityofdayton.org.

difference in the two models is in the creation and continuity of the Priority Board process. The members of these boards are elected through mail ballots sent to all registered voters and the boards meet regularly throughout the year, not just during the budget cycle. Each board also has support staff seconded from the city government to provide administrative and clerical assistance.

Fortunately, there are many other models of civic engagement evolving within local governments around the world as local leaders strive to make their budgeting processes not only more open and transparent but also more participatory and inclusive. For example, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the Institute of Development Policy Analysis and Advocacy works with slum dwellers and rural residents to help them understand public budgeting issues and how they impact on their lives. They distribute 100 coins of equal denominations to poor people with limited literacy and ask them to allocate the coins among different public expenditure categories. It expands their understanding of how public budgeting processes work and provides insights into what they think are priority concerns. In Lucenec, Slovakia, the local government develops what it calls a citizens' budget based on a series of public presentations and dialogues that shape the final decisions about public expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year. Many local governments make extensive use of the public media, i.e. newspapers, radio, television, even community newsletters, to describe what's in the proposed budget with the intent of getting citizen understanding and feedback before final adoption.

The lessons to be learned from these experiences are many but two stand out. One, civic engagement in the planning, development, and monitoring of public budgets is crucial to good governance. Second, there are many ways to fashion this process. It's up to the elected leadership of each local government to determine how best to engage its diverse communities of people, rich and poor, in helping to put together the annual budget. Unfortunately, it's possible to have an open and transparent budgeting process that involves every citizen in its formulation and yet be fiscally irresponsible as a governing body. That's why we want to take a hard look at many of your other financial responsibilities as an elected official.

A reflective opportunity

It's time to give you an opportunity to reflect about the level of involvement your citizens have in your annual budgeting process. On a scale of one to ten, jot down a number that best expresses your judgement about the participation of citizens, young and old, in the preparation of your budget: 1= no involvement; 5=some involvement; 10=significant involvement. Don't

hesitate to pick a number that falls somewhere in between these extremes if it helps you be more precise.

Your judgement call: ____.

How satisfied are you with this aspect of your budgeting process? What has influenced your judgement about the role of citizens in the process?

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Unless you are very satisfied, what are some ways your governing body might increase the role of citizens in the yearly planning and allocation of your local government's financial resources?

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How could you influence the rest of your elected colleagues to make this a priority in next year's budget preparation?

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Gender-responsive budget initiatives (GRBIs)

Another approach to budgetary analysis that is expanding from the national to the local levels of governments is Gender-Responsive Budget Initiatives (GRBIs). GRBIs are tools that analyse budgets to assess how government policies and programmes have different impacts on men and women, and boys and girls. GRBIs are not about separate budgets for women and men. They involve a gender-sensitive analysis of budget priorities. GRBIs enable government departments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to improve accountability and targeting of services, ensuring that ministries and municipalities respond to their constituencies and implement commitments.

Most people think of a budget as an objective exercise that does not affect women and men differently. They assume that budgets are *gender neutral.* But, since women and men in all countries have different roles and responsibilities, and different and unequal access and control of resources and decision making, budgets affect them differently. A major incentive for a gendered analysis of economics has been the lack of recognition of the value

of women's domestic labour in the national economy and consequently the undervaluing of women and their work in the home and the "care economy".

While eventually, GRBIs hope to influence and change the budget and budget making process; there are many gains to be made along the way. In particular, GRBIs are ways of enhancing democracy by enabling public participation and transparency in finance and decision making, and improving governance. Currently there are over fifty Gender-Responsive Budget Initiatives[116] underway at both the national and local levels. Amongst others, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Philippines, and South African all have GRBIs at the municipal levels.

Tools for gender-responsive budget initiatives (GRBIs)

GRBIs are not the easiest initiatives to launch and operationalise. However, they are well worth the effort as the outcomes and their impacts can be substantive and enable structural change. According to Diane Elson, an international specialist on gender and economics and who has pioneered the GRB analysis tools, the tools have a variety of functions and uses. Briefly, GRBI tools[117] enable the following:

Tool 1: Gender-Aware Policy Appraisal

Gender aware policy appraisal is the analysis of the policies and programmes funded through the budget, which ask, "In what ways are the policies and their associated resource allocations likely to reduce, increase, or leave unchanged gender inequality?"

Tool 2: Gender Dis-aggregated Beneficiary Assessment of Public Service Delivery and Budget Priorities

This tool collects and analyses the opinions of women and men on how current public service delivery meets their needs and how current patterns of public expenditure match their priorities. Questions focus on overall priorities for public spending or upon the details of the operation of public services.

Tool 3: Gender Dis-aggregated Public Expenditure Incidence Analysis

This tool examines the distribution of budget resources among females and males by measuring the unit costs of providing a given service and multiplying that cost by the number of units used by each group. It assesses the gender distribution of public spending.

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116 http://www.gender-budgets.org/en/ev-64152-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

117 Adapted from: Elson, Diane. 1999. Gender Budget Initiative. Background Papers. Gender and Youth Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, London, U.K. and Hewitt, Guy. "Gender Responsive Budget Initiatives: Tools and Methodology." In Gender Budget Initiatives: Strategies, Concepts and Experiences, UNIFEM, 2002.

Tool 4: Gender Dis-aggregated Public Revenue Incidence Analysis

This tool examines direct and indirect forms of taxation in order to calculate taxes paid by different categories of individuals or households. User charges on government services will also be considered.

Tool 5: Sex-Disaggregated Analysis of the Impact of the Budget on Time Use

Sex-disaggregated Analysis of the Impact of the Budget on Time Use is a calculation of the link between budget allocations and their effect on how household members spend their time. This ensures that the time spent on unpaid work is accounted for in policy analysis.

Tool 6: Gender-Aware Medium-Term Economic Policy

This tool is used to assess the impact of economic policy on women, focusing on fiscal, monetary, and economic policies designed to promote globalisation and reduce poverty.

Tool 7: Gender-Aware Budget Statement

This government statement reviews the budget and summarises its implications for gender equality with different indictors such as the share of the expenditure targeted to gender equality, the gender balance in government jobs, contracts or training, or the share of public service expenditure used by women.

A reflective opportunity

Do you know of examples where gender responsive budgeting through tools such as the above or similar to the above is being practised? What has been the impact of such initiatives?

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Which of these tools could be appropriate for application in your municipality under your governing body? Is there an enabling policy environment to apply these tools? If not, what could be done to encourage gender responsive budgeting in your local government?

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Putting the budget into perspective

The single most important output of the financial management process is information, reliable information. Without reliable information, elected men and women can't make good decisions and managers can't manage efficiently and effectively. In order to get reliable information, the municipal organisation needs to establish a number of data collection and analysis systems and procedures. These systems and procedures, when interconnected, form what some would call an integrated financial information system. At the heart of this system are financial accounting and management analysis. Flowing into these nerve centres are a series of critical inputs, some continuous and others cyclical, based on the fiscal calendar of events. They can be broken into four distinct categories:

❑ **Goals and objectives** - Encompassing reviews of community needs and past performance and the establishment of priorities;

❑ **Planning and budgeting** - Including multi-year planning, revenue forecasting, and budget preparation and adoption;

❑ **Reporting and monitoring** - Comparing planned and actual spending, monitoring programme and service performance, and taking corrective action where warranted; and

❑ **Evaluation -** Carrying out financial and performance audits and programme evaluations.

The first category *establishing goals and objectives,* is closely associated with the *policy- making* competency in Chapter Seven while *evaluation* is covered in the next chapter on the overseeing competency. We will also be looking in some depth at some of the financial policy issues a bit later, but for now we want to focus on a couple of budgeting issues that seem to be troublesome in many local governments.

Within the planning and budgeting phase of the integrated financial information system are two issues that seem to affect many local governments, particularly those in developing and transitional countries. They are (a) capital investment/multi-year planning and (b) the real costs of operation and maintenance. Capital investments often ignore community priorities for basic services while maintenance is given short shrift in many local government budgets.

Capital investment planning.

Before you buy shoes, measure your feet.

West African proverb

The planning and programming of public capital investments in many local governments is not always tied to their community's priorities. We remember seeing a large new football stadium in a South Asian city. It took little imagination to realise that this community was desperately in need of roads, drainage, water systems, and other basic facilities that could make life easier for its citizens. When we asked how often the stadium was used, the answer was, "Oh, three, maybe four times a year." These kinds of long-term and short-return investments are not restricted to any particular region of the world. Every country has them. Unfortunately, they divert scarce resources from the real needs of the community. Before we go any further, it might be useful to describe what a capital investment is. Very simply, it is an expenditure of funds for a community improvement that

- ❑ Is relatively expensive;
- ❑ Doesn't occur annually;
- ❑ Will last a long time;
- ❑ Results in a fixed asset; and
- ❑ Results in the recurrent costs of operations and maintenance.

Capital investment planning should begin with an inventory of existing public facilities and an assessment of their condition. This inventory should include a description of the asset, its location, age and condition, maintenance and operating costs, and the estimated cost and dates for rehabilitation or replacement. The inventory is a good place to begin the capital planning process because it backs us off from the immediate "wish list" approach to capital programming. And, it should establish whether or not the current physical plant is in need of upgrading or extensive rehabilitation before taking on new projects.

If your local government has the technical staff, they should be asked to prepare individual project requests using a standard form that will assure you have uniform data and information for establishing priorities and making final decisions. By using a participatory approach to budgeting you will be able to learn what capital investments they believe are crucial to their communities.

In each of these cases, you will want to develop comparable data to the extent you can. For example, each project request should be accompanied by a description of the project, its location, the purpose and justification for the project, who will benefit from it, and who will be adversely affected by this allocation of scarce fiscal resources. The request should explain how the needs for the project are currently being met and contain a detailed cost breakdown including both operating and maintenance costs

projected over the life of the project. The project request should also show its relationship to other projects, i.e., does it provide access to other capital investments, conformity to any master development plan you might have for your local government, and recommended methods of financing the investment.

While this kind of information and data may seem difficult to come by, it is critical to your ability to make sound decisions around these long-term, high-cost investments. Few local governments have the resources to undertake all the possible capital projects that are needed within the community. Relying on "political instincts" to develop your long- range capital improvement plans and investments is simply not adequate.

Once you are into the final stages of decision making on your capital budget, it's time to stop and ask the following questions:

1. Can we afford this investment?
2. Will it serve the people with the greatest need?
3. Does the project have widespread community support?
4. Will the benefits, over time, outweigh the costs?
5. Will we be able to operate and maintain the project after it is complete?
6. Could others, perhaps the private sector, be persuaded to undertake the investment so we can allocate our scarce resources to other needed projects?
7. Is the project justifiable given all of our community's needs and concerns?
8. Will it improve the financial condition of our local government?
9. Does it fit into our overall physical development plan?
10. Is it compatible with other major local government capital investments?
11. If we don't fund and carry out the project, can we live with the consequences?

A reflective opportunity

How does your governing body go about making decisions on capital investments? Think about the last major capital project your local government undertook. Was it really needed? Was the investment financially sound? Do the benefits justify the costs? Does your government have the resources, both technical and financial, to maintain the project?

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If the project came up today for approval by your governing body, would you vote for it based on the criteria listed above? To answer this

Operations and maintenance

It's no use starving the horse to fatten the mule.

Korean proverb

The other issue raised earlier along with capital investments was the importance of funding the ongoing operation and maintenance of equipment and capital investments. The routine maintenance of equipment and physical investments is a frequently forgotten item in many local government operating budgets. To prove our point, here are some poignant examples we've encountered along the way to writing this chapter.

❑ A major tourist hotel in Africa burned to the ground because the city fire department didn't have one piece of equipment that could make it to the scene. While one fire truck got out of the station, it broke down on the way to the fire. The rest were inoperative because of the lack of maintenance.

❑ An agricultural training centre was funded by one of the major bilateral development agencies and opened its doors for business. It involved several attractive buildings that were equipped to accommodate a staff of about twenty professional and support personnel. It was in a location that could benefit from its operation. Eleven years later, one of the authors had an opportunity to visit the centre. The director and his staff were still waiting to get an increase in operating funds so they could launch their first programme!

❑ A major newspaper in a South Asian country carried a story announcing that the president had officiated at the opening of a new "state-of-the art" water plant in a major city not far from the capital. Three weeks later, the same paper had a front page story reporting that the plant had to be closed down until spare parts and technical assistance could be obtained from the donor country.

❑ One of the authors took a job as a city manager many years ago and soon found out that maintenance had been largely ignored by both the elected and appointed officials. Over one

quarter of the water meters were inoperative creating potential health hazards and a major drain on utility revenues. Sewerage backups were a weekly occurrence due to blockages in the main collection lines to the treatment plant. And these operating nightmares were in a community that could afford routine maintenance.

❑ This space is reserved for your favourite non-maintenance disaster story

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Random thoughts on operations, maintenance, and budgeting

The operation and maintenance (OM) of equipment and infrastructure investments in many countries around the world have not won much praise from either local people or outsiders. Let's look at some of the factors that contribute to the dismal record of non-achievement in these areas of local-government performance.

❑ It is difficult to get spare parts for many of the mechanical devises that are used in many of these OM endeavours. The time to address this problem is in the planning of new projects. If this is seen as a future problem for a capital investment, then the investment may be in jeopardy. Don't put into operation something you can't keep in operation.

❑ Your local government doesn't have the skills to operate and maintain a new capital investment. This is not an insurmountable problem, but it takes some forward planning to eliminate the problem before it happens. If the equipment is donor given, make adequate training in both the operation and maintenance of the equipment a given before you accept it. We witnessed one such event when several million dollars of large, sophisticated road equipment was turned over to a district government. That was the good news. The bad news? The donor provided only three days of training to cover both the operation and maintenance of the equipment.

❑ Don't accept capital investment gifts that are inappropriate to your needs. The large road graders and bulldozers in the previous example were provided to the local governments to carry out maintenance on dirt roads that rarely saw anything larger than a pickup truck.

Some cynics say the reason you don't fund operation and maintenance of capital investments is the lack of opportunities for graft and corruption. We don't accept this rationale, and we hope you don't either. We're more inclined to believe that most elected officials simply don't appreciate or understand the enormous costs involved in not funding these vital functions adequately. Effective maintenance can be the most cost-effective investments you make in your government's efforts to serve the community. And the lack of maintenance can be very, very expensive!

A reflective opportunity

Because operation and maintenance functions are so important to effective governance, we suggest you stop for a few moments and reflect on your government's policies regarding them. What are your most serious maintenance problems: streets; water, sewerage, and other plant facilities; vehicles; public buildings; or all the above? Jot down those you think are most neglected.

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What are the consequences of these circumstances? And what can you as an individual elected official do about it?

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Budget time is also reality check time

There is no better time to take the financial pulse of your local government's financial condition than during the annual budget preparation and enactment season. It's not only the time to look ahead, but the time to look back and assess the financial condition of your local government. As we said before, the budget is not just an expenditure document, a wish list of what you would like to provide your citizens in the way of programmes and service. It is also a revenue document that tells you and your citizens just how these programmes and services will be financed, both short term and long range. Perhaps the first question to ask yourselves as elected officials

and your staff who should have the answers is: "What is the financial condition of our local government?"

Broadly defined, your financial condition is the ability of your local government to pay its own way on a continuing basis. More specifically, it is your ability to (a) maintain service levels, (b) weather economic disruptions, and, (c) meet the demands of economic growth, decline, and change. There are several financial condition factors you can monitor to keep on top of your local government's fiscal well-being. We suggest you look at these factors before you get too deeply into the formulation of your annual budget. They could save you valuable time and fewer headaches down the road. First, some questions you might want to ask regarding your local government's revenue sources.

> *If there is no oil in the lamp, the wick is wasted.*
>
> **Cambodian proverb**

Revenue indicators

1. Are some of your dependable revenue bases deteriorating? Have overall revenues per capita been decreasing over time?
2. Are there internal procedures or legislative policies in place that are adversely affecting your revenue yields? For example, do you have an unwritten policy of granting unrealistic and favourable tax assessment breaks to the rich and influential in your community? Is an increasing percentage of your revenue earmarked for specific uses?
3. Is your local government overly dependent on outside sources of income, e.g., grants from the national government or donor-assisted programmes that will dry up in the future?
4. If you have a property tax, are you experiencing a decline in revenue from this source? Have the property assessments been updated recently to reflect current market values?
5. Is the amount of unpaid taxes and accounts receivable from service fees and charges unusually high or increasing?
6. Has your local government been dependent on one-time revenue sources, such as loans, intergovernmental transfers, or use of reserves?
7. Are user fees declining in relation to related expenditures? For example, are market revenues going down while the costs of operating and maintaining the markets are increasing?
8. Have your local government's fees and charges for service been adjusted to reflect such factors as inflation and increasing costs of operation?
9. Is the demographic or economic nature of your community changing in such a way that it will adversely affect your ability to raise revenue in the

near future, e.g., increasing numbers of older citizens in relation to the rest of the population or loss of industrial jobs?

10. Are you experiencing revenue shortfalls? They may indicate a deterioration in your government's financial condition.

> *See before you spend how you can save.*
>
> **Floradale proverb**

Expenditure indicators

The other major financial category of events that needs your attention as an elected official particularly at budget time is expenditures. Ideally, your municipality should not have an expenditure growth rate that exceeds its revenue growth rate. Since expenditures have a way of "sneaking up on organisations," your diligence in this arena is particularly important. Here are some of the more important questions to be asking about the *expenditures* in the annual budget.

1. Is your local government experiencing an increase in expenditures per capita that exceeds your revenue increase per capita? If so, can you pinpoint the areas of cost increase? Are they associated with new programmes or services, on-going programmes and services, a particular department, capital vs. operating expenditures, or across-the-board costs such as salaries? To address cost increases, you need to know where they are happening and why.

2. Have you experienced an increase in the number of employees per capita?

3. Is personnel productivity declining?

4. Do you have "ghost workers" on the payroll? Some municipalities have sizeable numbers of people on their payrolls who never show up for work, are on more than one department's payroll, or died a few years back and still collect a pay check. It sounds bizarre, doesn't it? Nevertheless, it happens. One of the authors worked with a city a number of years ago to help them engage in a bit of ghost-busting. The city was able to eliminate over 1200 employees out of a work force of about 3000.

5. Are fixed, or "mandatory," costs increasing as a percentage of net operating expenditures? These are costs like debt service, pension benefits, and long-term lease agreements.

6. Are fringe-benefit costs increasing as a percentage of salaries and wages? Some local governments, for example, allow employees to accumulate years of unused leave time which puts a burden on future governing bodies.

7. Do you have ineffective budget controls that allow expenditures to creep up without anyone being aware or that allow over-expenditures in certain categories to go unchecked?
8. Is your local government ignoring its responsibilities for maintenance? If so, this could have serious future consequences, both in terms of costs and quality of service.

Other significant indicators to consider

1. Do you balance your budget on a current basis?
2. Do you maintain reserves for emergencies?
3. Does your local government have enough cash flow to pay its bills on time?
4. If your local government has established quasi-public enterprises to operate certain services such as water or sewerage facilities, are they running deficits? Many of these operations have a reputation for mismanagement so check them out before it's too late. Just because they aren't under your governing body's direct control doesn't mean they can't hurt your financial future.

Is there financial jeopardy in your future?

Many of the problems we've outlined could jeopardize the financial future of your local government if left unattended too long. When this happens, there is a tendency to seek solutions that don't solve the problem or overcome your fiscal ills but rather exacerbate the problem for those elected officials who follow in your footsteps. Let's briefly look at some of the actions that can take your local government from the fiscal frying pan into the fire. [118]

1. Are you continuing to use reserves built up in previous years to balance the budget? This is probably an unlikely scenario, but we thought we should mention it anyway.
2. Do you find the governing body in a situation where it has to continually borrow money to meet expenditures or to juggle funds from one account to another to cover current bills?
3. Are you consistently deferring maintenance costs and such long-term obligations as pension liabilities?
4. Are you selling community assets to meet current costs?

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[118] Godsey, Maureen W., Financial Jeopardy: Policies and Practices That Can Affect Financial Health, Chapter No. 3 (Washington, D.C., International City Management Association, 1980), pp.5-10.

5. Is your financial staff manipulating your "books" to make your financial condition look rosier than it is? By the way, such financial shenanigans can be either initiated by the staff to keep you in the dark or ordered by the governing body to make things look better than they are, particularly in an election year. It could include such creative accounting manoeuvres as postponing current obligations to future budgets and accruing revenues from the next fiscal year into the present.

A reflective opportunity

We have just listed more than twenty indicators that can inform you and your elected colleagues about the soundness of your financial transactions and systems. Take a few moments and review each of these questions. To how many of these questions don't you know the answer? .... How many of those you can answer give you a sense of fiscal satisfaction? .... How many of those to which you know the answers will cause you to either lose sleep or to think about resigning before the citizens find out how serious your local government's financial condition really is? ....

Based on your answers, jot down any actions you think you should take as an elected official representing your diverse communities to either celebrate your good fortune or to set off the alarm bells.

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A few pointers on reading financial statements

Before we close this discussion about your competency in doing a bit of detective work prior to tackling the budget, we thought it might also be helpful to provide a few tips on how to read those confusing financial statements. Many elected officials have a tendency to PANIC when handed a statement that is mostly filled with numbers. We can sympathize because we get a little intimidated with such things as well. Here are some clues about how to decrease the anxiety factor when you receive the monthly or quarterly financial statement from your management staff.

Concentrate initially on a few of the BIG indicators of the financial healthiness of your local authority. Are overall revenues meeting the projections made at budget time? To understand this part of the picture, you

will need periodic projections of specific revenue sources. These projections are important because some revenue sources are unevenly collected during the budget period. For example, achieving fifty percent of the total projected annual revenue by the end of the second quarter may be misleading if the total amount of that specific source was due to be collected during the first half of the year.

The same goes for tracking expenditures. Are they being maintained within the limits set by the total annual budget, and are they in keeping with the monthly projections made by your staff. If not, it's time to ask some pointed questions to specific staff members who are accountable for managing the finances for your local government.

Look at the revenue sources. Are some so small that it costs more to collect them than what they generate in revenue. This is not an unusual experience. If you have such unproductive revenue sources either eliminate them or increase their potential, if possible.

The same is true of expenditures. Do you have expenses that seem to be unusually high in relation to all others for no apparent reason? If so, it's time to ask an explanation from those who are responsible for them.

Apply Pareto's Rule. Simply put, Pareto said that, in general, eighty percent of revenue (or expenditures come from twenty percent of the sources or categories. Because this tends to be the case, it is generally more efficient and effective to focus on the twenty percent of revenue sources that are generating eighty percent of your funds, if you want to raise more revenue or to cut the twenty percent cost categories that are consuming eighty percent of your budget.

Another financial indicator to review is cash flow. Is the cash flow sufficient to cover ongoing expenditures? If not, what can you do about it? Can you slow down expenditures by postponing certain costs or speed up those revenue sources that may have such flexibility? For example, can business license fees be collected earlier in the year?

Just as important as cash flow is the potential for periodic or ongoing surpluses. If your local government is generating a cash-flow surplus, are you investing it in approved sources? Investing idle funds is an easy source of revenue.

After you have looked at the "big ticket" items, it is time to focus on some of the more obvious sources of financial understanding. Are there wide swings in the income or expenses being experienced in specific categories? For example, have market revenues dropped rapidly in the past month or quarter? If so, and there seems to be no acceptable reason for this, find out why. The same is true of expenditures. For example, has the cost of fuel jumped unexpectedly in recent months? If it has, find out why.

You might want to look for revenue sources and expenditure categories that aren't found in the financial statement. For example, if no funds are allocated for maintenance of streets and drains, you may want to ask a few pointed questions of your public works director. This is best done at budget time, but such questions are appropriate at any time of the year when you exercise your financing competencies.

A reflective opportunity

> *There aren't any embarrassing questions, only embarrassing answers.*
>
> **Floradale proverb**

Now is a good time to jot down some questions to which you've long wanted answers, but were afraid to ask anyone for answers. These questions concern your local government's budget, financial conditions, even those confusing financial statements. Don't be embarrassed. Chances are that many of your elected colleagues have been sitting on the same kinds of questions.

Questions about the overall budget process:

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Questions about some revenue sources or expenditures that I don't understand.

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Questions about those darned financial statements:

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Other questions that are keeping me up at night:

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Didn't that feel good? Now, jot down a few ideas about how you can get answers to these questions.

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One piece of wood does not keep the fire alight.

Kikuyu proverb Kenya

Thinking and acting beyond the budget

While the annual budget and all those related things we've been talking about are your most important and time-consuming fiscal roles and responsibilities, there are many other aspects of your financial competencies as an elected official. To put them into perspective, we want to share a conceptual map of the territory. This map evolved out of spirited discussions by a group of local government financial experts that UN-HABITAT pulled together from around the world to determine what should be included in a companion set of training materials on local government financial management.

Think of your financing responsibilities as being *short-term* and *long-range.* Your short-term responsibilities are embodied in the development and funding of the annual *operating budget.* Your long-range fiscal responsibilities are most often reflected in the development and funding of a *capital budget.* Capital budgets include all those large multi-year commitments that are passed on from one elected body to another often without their official approval. In other words, new governing bodies inherit the capital budget decisions of their predecessors. In some countries where local self governments are a recent phenomenon, capital budgeting is a new venture.

Some elected leadership financing competencies are more closely associated with the *operating budget.* For example, you should be looking for ways to maximize revenues and contain costs when it comes to the operating budget. When your local government is able to contain costs in one area of its operation, it's like raising revenues to fund another. You should also be asking questions of your management staff about the development of performance measures. These will help you determine if certain operating costs are producing the performance you expect. The *capital budget* is more associated with such competencies as *debt management* and *long-range planning.*

There are three financing competencies that cut across both budget processes. These are *citizen participation, policy making,* and *financial planning.* In addition to all these financing competencies that you as an elected official need to be aware of and in varying degrees to be skilled in applying, there are some others that you need to be assured are in place as part of your local government's financial management system. These are an *accounting process* that *provides on-going management* and *oversight information, a cash management system, a process for managing fixed assets* like structures and land, *public procurement procedures,* and *grant management capabilities.*

Fortunately, elected officials don't have to be skilled in all of these areas. Nevertheless, you need to know enough about them to ask the right kinds of questions of your management staff. On the other hand, if you are an elected official in a small local government, you might have significant financial operating responsibilities. How deeply you delve into each of these

specific areas of financial competencies will depend in part on the size of your local government, the depth of your general and financial management staff, and other variables.

To help you and your staff become more knowledgeable and skilled in all of these financial competencies, UN-HABITAT has developed a new series of training materials on local government financial management (LGFM). Check out their web-site for more details. In the meantime, we plan to conclude this discussion with a look at two important financial management responsibilities that fall within your domain as an elected official. Both can be cross referenced with other competencies, namely the *policy-making* and *enabling* competencies.

Financial policies

Financial policies describe the principles and goals that guide your financial management practices. They influence and guide your decision making on financial matters. They help you and your staff in the development of strategies to achieve your goals. They also provide the standards by which you monitor your local government's performance. In other words, policies are not just nice; they are crucial to the formulation and implementation of not only your budget but just about everything your local government does. In a financial policy inventory exercise developed for the UN-HABITAT LGFM training series, there are nearly forty different policy statements to consider. They cover such areas as the operating and capital budgets, accounting, auditing, revenues, debt and reserves, cash management, purchasing, and risk management.

Some policies are somewhat complicated while others are simple, For example, you might have a policy that says *all fixed assets will be valued and inventoried annually. Or, one that says your local government will have an annual audit performed by an independent public accounting firm which will issue an official opinion on the annual financial statements and a management report detailing areas that need improvement.*

Financial policies have many functions and benefits. They can, among other things, encourage financial planning, focus attention on your financial condition, assist in creating financial stability, help you achieve more consistency in your financial decision making, and provide a basis for establishing and evaluating various financial practices.

They can also contribute to the credibility of, and public confidence in, your local government. This is particularly important as you work with prospective investors or collaborators in the provision of public services. Policies provide both guidance and direction for your financial decision making initiatives. See the *Policy Making* competency chapter for more on how to perform this role.

Enabling others to get involved

There are many ways to enable others in your communities to help bear the financial costs of providing programmes, services, and goods to the citizens of all ages in your communities. We want to explore some of the options that you have at your fingertips. Some of these options should be reflected in your annual budgets if there is a monetary component to the arrangement while other options may not require budgetary actions. Did you notice that this part of your *financing* competency overlaps with your *enabling* competencies? As we said before, when you begin to naturally combine various competencies in your mind and actions, you quickly move from being just one of many elected officials to an elected leader. While there are many financial enabling options available, the one that seems to come to mind most quickly is the creative use that local governments are making of partnerships, not just public-private partnerships which seem to get the bulk of the publicity but many variations on this theme. It's as good a place as any to begin this part of the discussion.

Partnerships between and among local governments and a variety of other partners has become very common in local governments around the world. One source of information about these collaborative ventures is UN-HABITAT's best practices website. We've gleaned a few interesting examples from this source just to indicate how diverse this resource is for making your public funds go further.

❑ **The Municipality of San Salvador, El Salvador:** The city joined forces with nine other municipalities, private companies, non-governmental and community based organisations and a university to develop and implement an integrated solid waste management programme. It covers the gamut of solid waste management initiatives including on-site collection, street cleaning, separation of waste materials, recycling, composting and the operation of the landfill. Tangible results from the programme have included a twenty percent increase in collections in poor settlements, a forty percent reduction of clandestine dumping, and the creation of five cooperatives and five micro-enterprises.

❑ **The Patna Municipal Corporation in India** has spearheaded an initiative with surrounding local governments to install an area-based property tax assessment programme. It not only resulted in simpler professionally managed assessment procedures but also increased revenues for participating municipalities and reduced tax rates for property owners. This is what is called a win-win situation.

❑ **In Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso,** the municipal government has devised one of the most creative and unusual partnership efforts we have head about thus far. With ten percent or more of its population of slightly over one million engaged in informal sector

activities, the installation of temporary shelters and businesses was creating enormous traffic, health, and public safely problems. Among the most serious challenges was the need to provide safely guarantees for road users who were impeded in their movement by the lawless occupation of public right of ways. Working with informal sector traders and other stakeholders, the city offered traders secure land tenure and assurance of stability if they would build permanent shops lining these key right-of-ways. This resulted in the initial construction of 365 modern street shops. This initiative not only helped alleviate several serious public concerns; it helped to vitalise the informal sector.

❑ **The City of Palpala, Argentina** suffered a severe economic blow when the state-owned steel mill was closed in the early 1990's. The municipality formed a number of partnerships with private cooperatives, the local schools, a professional NGO, and various other community groups to support the development of nearly one hundred cooperative micro-enterprises to fill the economic void. The municipality was able to pull itself back from the brink of economic disaster by pooling their resources and pulling together. [119]

❑ **In India,** public forests are created one tree at a time when families and friends venture out to plant a tree in honour of someone's birthday. This charming tradition is known as social forestry.

❑ Halfway around the world in **Gettysburg, Pennsylvania** and many other communities low income housing is being built through cooperative efforts by the local government, volunteers, and an NGO called Habitat for Humanity. The use of sweat equity may not be as charming, but it's just as effective as a way of mobilising human capital to achieve public goals.

The types of possible partnerships between local governments and other sectors of the society are virtually endless. There are one-on-one partnerships between local governments and private businesses, NGOs, community based organisations, educational institutions, associations of businesses, other local governments, and individuals. And there are coalitions of various kinds of institutions that have been and can be formed to respond to a wide range of public service needs and concerns. Local governments often take the lead in these ventures.

They can leverage economic development, for example, by offering land and infrastructure improvements to perspective industrial and commercial clients. They can offer tax abatements in return for employment opportunities for its citizens. There are endless possibilities. However, not all partnerships are successful. Some fail outright; others flounder and die from a variety of

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[119] Faszbein, Ariel and Pamela Lowden, Working Together for a Change, (Washington, Economic Development Institute, The World Bank, 1999), pp. 108-10.

ailments. A public-private venture to build infrastructure projects in Victoria, Australia, apparently failed to achieve the financial rewards the city and national government had contemplated going into the project.[120] We suspect that you can identify many more from your own knowledge and experience.

Before any local government enters into a partnership with another government organisation, private business, NGO, CBO, professional association, educational institution, or even an individual to do something collaboratively, they should ask the following questions. And only after getting satisfactory answers should they move forward to forge the relationship.

1. What's in it for our local government and its citizens to pursue this partnership?
2. Equally important, what's in it for them to get involved with us?
3. What are the potential advantages of the partnership and the disadvantages — economic, political, social, environmental-from all possible angles?
4. What are the potential short-term and long-range consequences, both positive and negative, of the proposed partnership?
5. What's the worst possible scenario that might evolve from this partnership? And, of course, what's the best?
6. If it looks like this venture might fail, how could we get out of it with the least damage to all partners concerned?

> *If you sleep with a dog, you will rise with fleas.*
>
> **Greek proverb**

A reflective opportunity

Take a moment and think about the kinds of partnerships your local government is currently involved in or has been involved in during your time as an elected official. Jot them down without casting any judgement on their success now.

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For each of these, go back an assign a percentage to signify the level of success you believe they have experienced. For those with a seventy percent or more rating, jot down what you think contributed to their success.

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[120]   From an article on The Age website, www.theage.com.au 31 December 2003 by Kenneth Davidson.

        For those with a fifty percent or less rating, record why you think they failed.

        What lessons do you think you can draw from these experiences that might provide guidance to your governing body and local government in considering future partnerships?

Take an economist to lunch

We want to close this discussion about how you can sharpen your financial competencies by suggesting a couple of economic theories that many local governments have called upon to stretch their fiscal resources. They are: the multiplier effect, and elasticity. *The multiplier effect* occurs when something your local government has done to affect one aspect of your economic system generates a stimulating effect on another, often inadvertently. For example, your local government builds a large reservoir to increase your water supply and it turns out to be a valuable recreational amenity that also earns welcome concession funds that help to pay off the bond issue needed to fund the facility. Or, new technology has enabled your local government to not only get rid of the garbage and trash generated in your city but to also recoup much of the cost through recycling and composting.

        The biggest barrier to energizing the *multiplier effect* in most local governments is the reluctance to think and act outside the box. Or, to break down mythical barriers that stand in the way. For example, most school buildings go unused as much as 70% of the time because "they were built to support the education of our youth!" Stop for a moment and think about how your local government might mobilize its resources to take advantage of the multiplier effect. And jot it down now so you can share it with your elected colleagues and local government management staff.

        The following is one way I believe we can achieve a multiplier effect in the way we manage our local government:

Elasticity in another one of those economic terms you rarely find in government literature. In its simplistic meaning elasticity refers to the rate of change in one thing relative to another. Or, how one thing changes when another thing changes. Local governments have long known that property taxes are relatively inelastic whereas sale taxes tend to be very elastic as the local economy ebbs and wanes. But elasticity also comes into play in local government's capital investment schemes.

Certain investments in infrastructure can trigger both short term and long term gains if they are well planned and executed. For example, long term bonds are often issued by local governments to make capital investments based on the return they will bring the local government, in both direct and indirect revenue. While a new water treatment plant will generate revenue immediately through the sale of water, it can also spur economic development through servicing factories and commercial ventures that depend on a safe and reliable water supply.

Probably the most elastic resource that elected men and women have available is the human resources within their local government organization, the larger community, and their own governing body. The use of citizen authorities, boards, and commissions, or whatever you choose to call these citizen-based advisory mechanisms, are opportunities to stretch the policy and management capacities of your local government. And, most local governments rarely have a deliberate career development program that will challenge the elasticity of their employees' human performance potential. The nurturing of community-based organizations that can extend the reach of your local government's social service initiatives into the homes of the neediest is elasticity at work.

Elasticity and the multiplier effect are two economic terms that are hard to find in public administration text books. Nevertheless, keep them handy as you exercise your elected leadership competencies in the financial arena.

Key points

❑ Your financing responsibilities are probably your most time-consuming and important of all your responsibilities as an elected official. They can also be your most problematic because of their complexity and potential for misuse.

❑ Openness and transparency are the two most important good governance principles in defining how you use your financing competencies.

❑ Nevertheless, other good governance principles are also important and need to be factored into your financial

decisions as elected officials.

- ❑ When elected men and women combine their financial competencies with the other competencies in this series, they are on their way to becoming elected leaders.
- ❑ The budget is the centre piece of elected official fiscal decision-making responsibilities.
- ❑ While there are many different ways to formulate a local government budget, all of these procedures fall short of fulfilling your responsibilities as an elected body if they don't engage the public fully in the process.
- ❑ Civic engagement in local public financial management is synonymous with good governance. See that it happens in your community.
- ❑ While many models exist to make civic engagement a part of your budgeting process, the best model is one that you create working with your staff and diverse communities.
- ❑ The planning and implementation of local capital investments is too often carried out without considering all the community's needs and priorities.
- ❑ Routine and preventive maintenance may be the biggest single void in most local government budgets.
- ❑ Revenue, expenditure, and other financial indicators will tell you how healthy or sick your local government is at any point in time.
- ❑ Learning how to read financial statements is an important elected leadership financing competency.
- ❑ One helpful way to look at your overall financing responsibilities as an elected official is from short-term and long-range perspectives. Add the cross-cutting competencies of civic engagement, policy making, and financial planning and you have a more comprehensive picture of what your elected leadership's financial role is all about.
- ❑ Civic engagement in putting together a public budget also involves your enabling competencies.
- ❑ Don't forget the potential fiscal and human benefits in elasticity and the multiplier effect.
- ❑ Developing your financial competencies as an elected official is a never ending process. This is an indication of how much there is to learn.

There is a saying among the native American Lumbee community that *Knowledge is of the past; wisdom is of the future.* Elected leadership, when applying your financing competencies, requires both.

Chapter 11:
The Overseeing
Competency

Conviction is worthless unless it is converted
into conduct.

Thomas Carlyle, 18th Century Scottish essayist and historian

Introduction

The overseeing competency covers a wide range of possible issues, concerns, options, and strategies. While it may not be your most favourite elected leadership role and responsibility, it is among your most important, *particularly if you take it seriously.* Now that sounds like a challenge that you might want to take issue with. Before you walk out of this discussion, we want to put the overseeing competency into perspective. Your overseeing responsibilities run the gamut from the perfunctory yearly audit of your local government finances to concerns about corruption within your own ranks and the institution you represent on behalf of the citizens. The budgeting process is, of course, your biggest opportunity to apply your overseeing knowledge and skills. Since we have dealt with this major overseeing responsibility in the previous chapter, it will not figure prominently in this discussion. Nevertheless, keep it in mind as we discuss various other ways to be the competent and watchful overseer.

> To paraphrase a nineteenth century Hungarian chemist,
> "Overseeing is seeing what everyone has seen and thinking what nobody
> has thought."

In between the two polar extremes of corruption and compliance audits are a number of others that we also want to discuss. They include such things as management and performance audits within the local government organisation, policy oversight opportunities, the need to review external contractual relationships and transactions, and how these overseeing responsibilities and competencies relate to good governance principles and the other elected leadership competencies. What may seem like a rather minor role and responsibility as an elected official may in fact be monumental depending on the state of your local government's level of mismanagement activities.

In addition, the role of local governments around the world has been changing in recent years and these changes make the overseeing roles and responsibilities of elected officials more important and challenging. The focus on good governance principles has defined some new overseeing challenges for local governments. For example, issues of inclusiveness and equity for many local governments are redefining how they measure performance. And

responsibilities for poverty alleviation and sustainable development go far beyond the traditional notions of accurate financial records as the defining oversight variable. We will discuss these new challenges a bit later but for now we want to return to an issue that can cut to the heart of your overseeing responsibilities. Corruption!

One of the most important books to be published about local governments recently is *Corrupt Cities, a Practical Guide to Cure and Prevention.*[121] It is important because it defines the mechanisms that provide a fertile ground for corruption within local governments and describes practical and hard hitting ways to attack this monster that resides within so many local governments around the world. We will be drawing heavily on the insights and advice of the authors of *Corrupt Cities* to address this aspect of your overseeing responsibilities and to show how it fits within your toolkit of *overseeing* competencies. Before looking at the potential challenge of corruption as an overseeing responsibility, we want to give you an opportunity to reflect a bit about your overseeing responsibilities. After that we will look at how your *overseeing* competencies relate to the good governance principles.

A reflective opportunity

When you think of your governing body's overseeing role and responsibilities, what immediately comes to mind?
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What do you think is the most important problem your local government is currently facing that falls within the category of overseeing responsibilities of the governing body?
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What, if anything, do you think you and your elected colleagues should do to address the problem?
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[121] Klitgaard, Robert with Ronald Maclean-Abaroa and H. Lindsey Parris, Corrupt Cities: a Practical Guide to Cure and Prevention, (Oakland, CA. Institute for Contemporary Studies, 2000).

Overseeing and good governance

The citizens of your diverse communities are important allies in helping you and your elected colleagues carry out your overseeing responsibilities. And there are many ways to get citizens involved in overseeing the performance and conduct of your local government. They include different kinds of citizen surveys, focus groups, citizen action centres located in the foyer of your municipal building, neighbourhood councils, educational programmes in the schools and community centres about the need for vigilant oversight of public performance, and the involvement of private and NGO sector organisations. In Bangalore, India, one of the prominent NGOs issues a "report card" on how well the municipal government was doing through the eyes of their citizens. In their citizen surveys, they asked such questions as, "How often do you need to pay a bribe to receive a municipal service?" The results haven't been encouraging, but it does have an impact on the municipal officials and their ability to strengthen their oversight initiatives.[122] While the good governance principle of *civic engagement* may be your most important overseeing ally, *transparency, accountability,* and *the rule of law* should be at the centre of your overseeing competencies. They are the standards we most often associate with the oversight of most public institutions.

While many governing bodies only view their overseeing role from the perspective of the annual financial audit, there is much more to this elected responsibility. Oversight also means scrutiny of how services are being planned and delivered to all people, young and old within your electorate domain. Thus enter the good governance principles of *equity, inclusion, efficiency,* and *subsidiarity.* When corruption becomes a factor in the delivery of public services, it's the poor that get hit the hardest in your community. After all, they often can't afford basic services at the legitimate rates. Add bribes and other under-the-table surcharges, and the poor are effectively excluded in receiving many public services.

The good governance principles of *efficiency* and *effectiveness* are more often than not defined by the satisfaction of citizens with the performance of their local governments in delivering basic public services. As a result, you, your elected colleagues, and your management staff need to involve citizens in these aspects of your overseeing responsibilities. However, these two principles may be looked at quite differently by some people if corruption has seeped into the picture.

One of the authors was interviewing merchants in a developing country to determine what the city could do to improve its business climate. When asked if corruption was a problem in getting export permits, one merchant said, "You need to understand there is a difference between *corruption* and *greasing the palm.*" He explained that greasing the palm was not paying the inspector to do something he shouldn't be doing, but rather to reward him to do what he should be doing anyway, but faster. From his

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[122] Paul, Samuel, "Evaluating Public Services: A Case Study on Bangalore, India," New Directions for Evaluation, American Evaluation Association, no. 67, Fall, 1995.

perspective he was paying a bit extra for efficient service. From an overseer's perspective, it's corruption, or should be. With this in mind, it's a good time to look at the issues of corruption as they relate to your overseeing responsibilities, and the competencies that will help you carry them out.

Overseeing and the corruption challenge

> *The corruption of government almost always begins with its leaders.*

The Spirit of the Laws Montesquieu, (1748) 18th Century French politician - philosopher

The authors of *Corrupt Cities* start their book by saying, *Corruption is a universal problem, but around the world local governments seem particularly vulnerable.*[123] It's not exactly a new pronouncement about the vulnerabilities of local governments to corruption. Sallust, the Roman historian and politician, referred to Rome as "a venal city ripe to perish if a buyer can be found." And that was in the first century B.C.! What makes corruption such a compelling issue these days in local governments is not the newness of the "itching palm avarice" as William Shakespeare referred to it in his play *Julius Caesar* in 1599. Rather it's the increasing attention that public corruption is getting worldwide because of its enormous social, economic, political, and environmental costs to local government institutions and local communities. As Peter Eigen, chairman of Transparency International, likes to say, "Corruption is on the world's agenda."

Transparency International defines corruption as "the misuse of entrusted power for private benefit."[124] When it becomes systemic in institutions, it destroys them whether they are private corporations, non-governmental enterprises, or public bodies like local governments. Systemic, or institutionalised corruption as it is sometimes called, when unchecked will seep into every level of the organisation and its outreach. Every decision and act has its price. The authors have come across situations where elected officials had to bribe their own local government managers to get things done for "their" constituents.

When corruption reaches this state, it is deadly; and this unfortunately is the situation in many cities around the world. Systematic corruption generates economic costs by distorting incentives, political costs by undermining institutions, and social costs by redistributing wealth and power toward the

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[123] Klitgaard, Robert with Ronald Maclean-Abaroa and H. Lindsey Parris, Corrupt Cities: a Practical Guide to Cure and Prevention, (Oakland, CA. Institute for Contemporary Studies, 2000), p.1.

[124] Pope, Jeremy, Confronting Corruption: the Elements of a National Integrity System, (Berlin, Germany, Transparency International, 2000), p.2.

undeserving. When corruption undermines property rights, the rule of law, and incentives to invest, economic and political development is crippled.[125]

For many local governments around the world, corruption is not something they want to talk about or to put on their oversight agenda. Unfortunately, most elected officials have a zillion excuses why corruption is NOT an overseeing concern worthy of their attention. Let's see if we can summarize some of the more popular ones.

- ❏ Corruption is everywhere.
- ❏ Corruption has always existed.
- ❏ It's like sin, part of human nature.
- ❏ Unfortunately we can't do anything about it.
- ❏ The concept of corruption is too vague.
- ❏ It's culturally determined.
- ❏ It would require a wholesale change of attitudes and values in the organisation and community, and who has the time to do this?
- ❏ It's not really that bad so why bother?
- ❏ Besides, exposing it will hurt a lot of innocent people [126]

Now that we have these excuses out of the way, let's take a look at how you can fight corruption in your local government if, of course, it ever becomes a problem.

He who wants to keep his garden tidy doesn't reserve a plot for weeds.

Dag Hammarskjold, 20th Century Swedish UN Secretary General: (1953-61)

C = M + D - A

Dipak Gyawali in an unpublished manuscript on structural dishonesty many years ago devised the formula C=M+D-A to define corruption. The authors of Corrupt Cities use it to not only define the term but to describe various ways to fight corruption. According to Gyawali, corruption (C) equals monopoly power (M) plus discretion by officials (D) minus accountability (A). Using the "palm greasing" scenario of the merchant and the inspector mentioned earlier, let's see how this formula applies. The inspector in this situation had monopoly power over the municipal service of export licences and the

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[125] Klitgaard, et al, p. 4.
[126] Our apologies to the authors of Corrupt Cities for "corrupting" their litany of excuses for why leaders don't fight corruption.

discretion to decide whether the merchant got the license. Since the inspector was not being held *accountable* by his supervisor and the merchant was willing to pay the bribe to get his fruit on the flight to Europe that night, corruption occurred.

From an overseer's perspective, the issues are clear. With a little courage, determination, and assertive management, the local government could reduce the monopolistic powers of the inspector, limit and clarify his discretion in issuing permits, and increase accountability by his supervisor. Of course, transparency on the part of the merchant in exposing this inspector could have helped if the system wasn't also corrupt. Here was a clear cut case of citizen participation in the corrupting process. There are times when citizen participation runs amok! As the authors of *Corrupt Cities* point out:

> Corruption is a crime of calculation, not of passion. People will tend to engage in corruption when the risks are low, the penalties mild, and the rewards great. The rewards will be greater as monopoly power increases. Incentives at the margin are what determine the calculations of corrupt and potentially corrupt officials and citizens. Change information and incentives, and you change corruption.[127]

They also outline what they call a device for stimulating the creative and analytical abilities of those interested in controlling corruption. By stripping away a bit of the flowery rhetoric and reworking some of the steps in their framework, we have come up with a strategy for you to consider in sharpening your overseeing competencies to fight corruption.

Putting M+D-A into action

If possible, recruit a critical mass of concerned others. At the first sign of corruption or at the first sign that there is a will to address corruption in your local government, identify concerned others and recruit them into your corruption-busting camp. Keep in mind that you will need all the help you can get so form a coalition of willing investigating partners to go after this cancerous growth in your governing system.

Next, **gather as much information as possible.** Where is the perceived corruption? How bad is it? Who is involved? What are the adverse consequences to the local government and the community? Former Mayor Ronald MacLean-Abaroa of La Paz, Bolivia, undertook one of the most successful initiatives to fight corruption in his city in the 1980's. He found

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[127] Klitgaard, et al, p. 27.

among other things that city employees were interested in helping in the diagnostic phase as long as the focus was on trying to identify faults in the system that led to the corruption rather than pointing fingers to those involved in perpetuating the corruption.

Focus on the M and D factors in the corruption formula. Are there places in the organisation where monopoly powers exist that can be exploited either by the client or the holder of the power? Are there situations where individuals or units in the organisation are granted unfettered discretion that can be exploited? If these conditions exist, either eliminate or minimize them.

Many years ago the customs tax administration department in a south Asian country redesigned the physical space where they were processing customs permits so traders and others couldn't have direct access to the individual clerks who were doing the processing. When the traders handed in their papers at the counter to be processed, they were given a number to identify their location in the queue. As a result, they had no idea who would be handling their paperwork. These changes and others resulted in phenomenal increases in tax revenues. The monopoly powers and discretion of individual clerks had been removed.

As a result, accountability rose dramatically. Tax receipts increased by nearly twenty-five million dollars during the first three months of operation under the new system. At a meeting of business owners who were clients of the tax office, they confided that the system was not only saving them time but also money in spite of the huge increases in custom tax revenues they were forced to pay. Corruption can be expensive.

Some of the most corruptible functions within local governments are those that:

- ❑ grant permits and licenses,
- ❑ allocate scarce resources like subsidized housing,
- ❑ levy fines and other enforcement penalties,
- ❑ purchase goods and services for the organisation,
- ❑ make zoning and other decisions that result in monetary rewards for those requesting the decisions,
- ❑ award construction contracts that are followed by a constant flow of addendums to reward politically connected firms, and
- ❑ make use of public facilities and services for personal gain.

Work to screen out the dishonest and penalize them. Penalties can vary depending on the severity of the transgression. Sometimes compassion is warranted. Taking away the temptations for corruption can often resolve individual cases. In the customs tax example just cited, the director made a wholesale switch in clerks working in that department the day before the new system went into effect. He realized he couldn't fire so many corrupt officers, but he could minimize their exposure to temptation.

On the other hand, it is often necessary to break the cycle of corruption by going after high profile cases and officials. In a successful effort to root out corruption in the City of Hong Kong many years ago, they went after the "big fish" first. Increase supervisory authority to discipline

subordinates and back them up. Use a variety of penalties for corrupting behaviour such as transfers, publicity, loss of professional standings and privileges. When these warning shots fail, dismissal is always appropriate.

Reward good performance and behaviour. Often corruption is encouraged by low wages and other factors that are in the hands of governing bodies and management. Pay competitive wages, reward specific actions that reduce corruption, base promotions and other incentives on performance, and involve employees in making decisions that will help to diminish opportunities for corruption. Run the numbers on corruption and you will find that eliminating it can be very cost effective. The customs operation cited earlier increased their revenue by nearly one hundred million dollars the first year of their new operation.

Improve overseeing and management information systems. The audit systems need to go beyond the traditional financial reports and deal with overall performance, management systems, and policy analysis. Carry out what some call vulnerability assessments that look at areas where local governments are most vulnerable to potential corruption, i.e. licensing and permit services, contract awards, code enforcement, and purchasing.

Two cautionary notes. We've been talking about an attack on corruption that involves not just the governing body but senior management personnel and others in the local government organisation. When faced with corruption and a desire to overcome its insidious tendencies in a public institution, the governing body needs to provide leadership and constant support to its management staff and employees. Unfortunately, it is easy to step across the policy-administrative boundaries that define roles and responsibilities between elected officials and administrative staff when dealing with corruption. By working closely with the staff and keeping roles clear, it is possible to build overseeing procedures and systems that not just honour individual roles and responsibilities but foster the spirit of cooperation in oversight situations.

The second cautionary note is to remind you that corruption has a tendency to grow back when vigilance is weakened. As the authors of Corrupt Cities lament, La Paz and other cities have had difficulty retaining the ground they have gained against the forces of corruption.

> For better or worse, cities in many countries are the most accessible form of state power and wealth. In the hands of unscrupulous opportunists or idealists unable to manage, city governments can easily become the sites of petty tyrannies or systematic corruption or both. The threats are endemic.[128]

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128 Klitgaard, et al, p.111

Codes of conduct

Organisations that are serious about fighting corruption in their ranks should consider developing and adopting a code of conduct or code of ethics. Never mind which you call it. *Ethics* are statements of values and principles that define the purpose of your organisation. *Conduct* describes expected behaviour. Codes typically cover all individuals who are associated with the organisation whether elected, appointed or hired. They are effective only so long as those whom they apply to continue to believe in their worth. Here are some broad guidelines for their development.

As Professor Alipio Casall, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, reminds us, "The process of producing a code of ethics must intentionally involve all members of the group or organisation it will include and represent." In other words, the governing body shouldn't craft a code of ethics or conduct without involving all those who will be expected to live by its mandates. This wide-spread engagement with staff and employees as well as those men and women who serve on appointed boards and commissions accomplishes at least two goals. It raises the awareness and sensitivity of all those who will be subject to its enforcement. In addition, those who have a hand in creating it will have a higher commitment to living by it. At least, that's the theory.

Don't bother adopting some other local government's code just because it sounds impressive or because you don't want to be bothered by crafting your own. They are both admissions that adopting such a code is probably not worth the effort. In other words, carve those principles and expected behaviours out of your own experience and convictions. The language doesn't need to be fancy. It just needs to be clear about what is expected from everyone in terms of ethical norms and behaviour. As English novelist George Eliot reminds us, "No great deed is done by falterers who ask for certainty."

The good governance principles we have been talking about in every chapter should certainly be worked into your code in very practical ways. Since *integrity* is the antithesis of corruption, it is also a good beacon to guide your efforts. The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in its *Ethics Report* states that integrity is reflected in the following operational norms of local governments.

- ❑ Public servant's behaviour is in line with the public purposes of the organisation in which they work.
- ❑ Daily public service operations are reliable.
- ❑ Men and women receive impartial treatment on the basis of legality and justice.
- ❑ Public resources are effectively, efficiently, and properly used.
- ❑ Decision-making procedures are transparent to the public, and measures are in place to permit public scrutiny and redress.[129]

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[129] Public Management Committee, Organisation for Co-operation and Development, Ethics Report, (Paris: OECD, 2000), p.6.

Helping your organisation to develop and enforce a code of ethics or conduct is definitely part of your overseeing competencies and responsibilities.

Before we leave this aspect of the *overseeing* competencies, we urge you to get a copy of *Corrupt Cities.* It is available directly from the publishers, the Institute for Contemporary Studies or the World Bank Institute. Their respective websites are: www.icspress.com and www.worldbank.org/wbi. Transparency International (TI), OECD, and UN-HABITAT are also good sources of materials and help on corruption in local governments. UN-HABITAT has available a resource guide on Developing and Managing Professional Codes of Ethics which gives important clues about how to go about performing this part of your overseeing responsibilities. UN-HABITAT and TI have teamed up to produce Tools to Support Transparency in Local Governance. OECD has a number of helpful publications such as Principles for Managing Ethics in the Public Service. Their respective websites are: www.transparency.org , www.oecd.org , and www.unhabitat.org. Check them out frequently since new publications are constantly coming on-line to help public officials better manage these difficult challenges.

A reflective opportunity

Obviously, corruption is among the most difficult challenges that local government officials can be confronted with. Probably the first action that you can take, if there is corruption in your governing system but nothing is being done to address it, is to confront your own denial of the problem. Or if corruption is not a problem now, what would you do if it raises its ugly head in the organisation? Jot down your thoughts on what you might do under these circumstances.

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There is no need to fear the wind if your haystacks are tied down.

Irish proverb

To the other end of the *overseeing* spectrum

From the perspective of using your *overseeing* competencies, financial and compliance audits are probably at the polar extremes from dealing with corruption. These are the audits that are most often required by law. While there are other kinds of audits you should be considering, let's look at the mandated ones. During the Expert Group Meeting that was held in Nairobi by UN-HABITAT to help draft the terms of reference for this new series of elected leadership training materials, there was reference made to various kinds of elected oversight committees, i.e., ward committees, standing committees, finance committees, oversight committees, public accounts committees, and more.

We raise this issue because the overseeing role and responsibilities of local government elected bodies and the governing mechanisms that have these primary responsibilities are often called different things and come into existence in different ways. They may be mandated from a higher level of government; they may be controlled from within; they may require external professional assistance; there may be a separate elected committee with these responsibilities; etc. Because of these variations we can only talk in generalities and counsel you to put this discussion into the perspective of your local government's responsibility for auditing however it might be established. In spite of this disclaimer, we believe there are some things about this aspect of your overseeing responsibilities that may require additional competencies.

The financial and compliance audit

This is the one audit that is most likely obligatory. While your local government's elected body might have a standing committee that has the responsibility to see that this audit is conducted periodically, the auditors must be independent of the local government. They can have no direct or indirect interest in the financial affairs of either the local government or its elected and appointed officers. These criteria get to be a bit difficult to meet in a small remote local government where financial expertise is scarce and everyone is somehow connected to everyone else.

The objectives of the financial and compliance audit are to determine if:

❑ the financial transactions of the organisation have been conducted according to generally accepted standards;

❑ these transactions have complied with appropriate statutes of the audited organisation and other public bodies that may have contributed to the financial condition of the organisation

through such mechanisms as grants and loans; and
❑ the financial reports of the local government have been presented fairly and accurately.

Ideally, these audits should comment on the financial systems being used by the local government. For example, is there a system of internal control in place to determine the reliability of accounting data? Is there a process in place to manage cash transactions? The financial and compliance audit is primarily associated with the good governance principles of *accountability, openness,* and *transparency.*

GASB 34: In 1999, the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) in the United States issued a proclamation that struck initial fear into the hearts of state and local government officials nationwide. We mention this because many local government officials in other countries have probably heard of GASB 34, as it is called, and because it set new standards of financial reporting that may be of interest to many of you.

GASB 34 when it was pronounced represented a dramatic shift in how local governments were required to present financial information to their citizens, particularly information involving capital assets. Based on principles of transparency and accountability, local governments are now required to report on the overall condition of their government's health, not just individual funds that are normally covered in annual financial audits. They must provide complete information about the costs of delivering services to their citizens; information about their infrastructure assets, such as buildings, bridges, and utilities; and an analysis of their financial performance.

While GASB as a private, non-profit organisation has no regulatory or enforcement powers to make local governments comply with these standards, ignoring them could seriously affect their ability to raise funds through bond issues and grants from state and federal government agencies. GASB 34 clearly raised the bar in terms of financial reporting standards which in turn affected local government's overseeing responsibilities.

For those interested in learning more about GASB 34, we suggest you contact the Government Finance Officers Association on their website: www.gfoa.org

Overseeing

Effectiveness and efficiency: The basis for audits and much more

*It is not only the water but the banks which
make the river.*

Gandhi, 20th Century Indian nationalist leader

The principles of good governance as described the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific include *efficiency* and *effectiveness.*

> Good governance means that processes and institutions produce effective results that meet the needs of society while making the most efficient use of resources and promoting sustainability.[130]

These two principles of good governance can also be audited which means among other things that they should be part of your overseeing competency tool kit. Unlike the financial and compliance audit, they may not be mandated by law, but they are important and warrant your attention. To build on Gandhi's metaphor, *effectiveness* and *efficiency* are like the "banks" of the financial river. While we will describe in more precise terms what effectiveness and efficiency audits involve, these two terms deserve some discussion.

Peter Drucker defines *effectiveness* as doing the right things and *efficiency* as doing things right.[131] In simplistic terms, effectiveness is the elected leader's primary responsibility whereas efficiency is primarily the role of the local government officers and employees. The problem with this easy dichotomy is the fact that your governing body also needs to look at how it does "things right" and the management team needs to be concerned with whether it is doing what it should be doing as well as whether it is doing these things right. Peter Drucker also reminds us that *there is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.*

In determining whether you are doing the right things as an elected body, you need to periodically review all local government programmes and services from two perspectives:

❑ Is this particular service or programme still needed by our citizens?
❑ If it is still needed, should the city be the producer or should someone else be producing it?

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[130] What is Good Governance? United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, www.unescap.org/huset/gg/governance.htm .
[131] Drucker, Peter, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices (Ney York, Harper and Row, 1974), p.45.

One could say that this latter question really gets into the realm of "doing things right." While your staff can help you with researching the pros and cons of contracting out a service or even dropping it, your governing body will need to make the final decision. If you decide that your local government should not be performing a public service directly, for example, solid-waste collection, but rather contracting it out to the private sector, you still have a vital role to play in establishing standards to govern this public service. This is where the lines of authority and responsibilities get a bit muddled between the policy makers and the administrators.

Just to confuse the discussion a bit more, let's look at what Osborne and Gaebler in *Reinventing Government* had to say about these terms. "Efficiency is a measure of how much each unit of output costs; whereas, effectiveness is a measure of the quality of that output (how well it achieved the desired outcome)."[132] These authors seem to beg the question of "doing the right things" that Drucker says is the essence of effectiveness. But they cover this difference by use of the terms "outputs" and outcomes".

Osborne and Gaebler say, "There is a vast difference between measuring process and measuring results." Outputs, they say, don't produce outcomes. If, for example, your community's vocational school is graduating fifty students a year in irrigation-pump maintenance, but there are no jobs available as irrigation-pump mechanics, how good is the programme? Or, in Drucker's terms, is the school doing the right thing? The school's output is impressive, but the outcomes are nil since these new graduates are unable to get jobs in the trade for which they were trained. It's a case of doing something well that doesn't need to be done at all.

In the situation just noted, the school superintendent could argue that she was successful in meeting both criteria. That is (a) she came under the projected costs of producing an irrigation-pump maintenance graduate and (b) the quality of the graduates meet industry standards, i.e., they can perform all the tasks expected as a result of this type of educational programme. One could counter-argue that the superintendent was not successful in terms of effectiveness because her graduates are not working in positions that use their skills.

You can begin to see the dilemma in attempts to be too precise about the particulars of the overseer's responsibilities. To return to the school superintendent for a moment, how can she be held accountable for the job environment? Isn't that someone else's job? And yet if she and her staff were carrying out a strategic planning process efficiently, doing planning and forecasting right, which is also effective because planning and forecasting are the right things to do as managers, they should have known there was no demand for their product. In this case, they could have retooled their operations to train other kinds of technicians, e.g., sewer plant operators, based on a demonstrated need.

We have included this rather circular set of arguments about outputs and outcomes, effectiveness and efficiency, and the roles and

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[132] Osborne, David and Ted Gaebler, Reinventing Government, (Reading, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley, 1992), pp.351-2.

responsibilities of elected officials and local government managers and staff because they figure prominently in the two additional audits about to be discussed. Let's look at what is entailed in performing *efficiency* and *effectiveness* audits as part of your overseeing competencies.

The *efficiency* audit

While this audit bears a close resemblance to a management study, it is designed to bring rigour to the periodic maintenance of the organisation. It is concerned with the quality of management, the structure of the organisation and whether this needs to be altered given new operating realities and the operational performance of various programmes and services. It looks at the extent of inefficiencies and underlying causes, failures to achieve the governing body's policies and objectives, and any deviations from management directives. While such audits can be conducted by an independent body, we recommend that it be organised and conducted as a participatory venture by the management staff and employees. Efficiency audits should be done every three to five years unless major changes have taken place in the operation of the organisation or significant external conditions warrant a more frequent in-depth look.

In addition to the periodic efficiency audit that is more focused on systemic concerns in the organisation, your staff should be engaged in performance measurement activities on a routine basis.

The effectiveness audit

Effectiveness audits are designed to determine whether the desired results and benefits of your policies and programmes are being achieved, whether the objectives your governing body has established are being accomplished, and whether your local government has considered alternative ways of service delivery that might yield better results at lower costs. Unlike the efficiency audit, that is largely management directed, these effectiveness audits should involve service users, local people and other independent parties. By encouraging citizen *participation* in effectiveness audits, you can also address good governance principles such as *equity* and *inclusiveness.* For example, how inclusive is your job skills training programme? Or, how equitable are the utility charges for water based on consumption and ability to pay criteria?

Effectiveness audits can also address the good governance principle of *subsidiarity* and the possibility of public-private partnerships. And these ventures will also give you an opportunity to use your enabling competencies, not to mention your *negotiating, decision-making* and *facilitating* competencies.

Putting these audits into practice: Your governing body has budgeted funds to conduct a concentrated rodent control programme in three low-income neighbourhoods. The programme is based on petitions from the citizens and warnings from the city health department of impending environmental and health problems if initiatives are not taken to eradicate the rodent problem. Based on the governing body's objective and the amount of funds budgeted for this programme, the city's health department and several neighbourhood groups in the targeted area established several performance-based targets. Within three months of the budget adoption, they plan to eliminate seven open dumps, treat 150 vacant structures known to harbour rodents, hold twenty-five public meetings to instruct residents on individual initiatives they can take to assist in the programme, distribute 400 traps donated by a local manufacturer, and survey all residents in the target areas at the beginning of the campaign and at the end to determine their levels of satisfaction with the programme.

While these performance measures and programme initiatives would be the responsibility of the staff and not the elected officials, elected officials charged with overseeing the implementation of their policy would find these measures very helpful. In addition, they would be pleased to know that a number of competencies had been used to address this concern, i.e., enabling, financing, communicating, facilitating, and policy making.

Benchmarks and best practices

Before we leave the world of efficiencies and effectiveness, we want to say a few words about two terms you have no doubt heard frequently in your public service as an elected official. The first is best *practices,* a virtual cottage industry run by international bureaucrats who spread the word of who's doing what with whom that the rest of us should know about and learn to emulate. The second is *benchmarking,* a term that has been described as the "search for industry best practices that lead to superior performance."[133] Since these terms apparently overlap in the literature of management and *overseeing,* we will eventually meld them into one strategy for your overseeing considerations. As we will see, they have a rich history.

Sun Tzu a Chinese general, who sat down more than 2500 years ago to record his thoughts on such things, wrote, "If you know your enemy and

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[133] Camp, Robert, Benchmarking: the Search for Industry Best Practices that Lead to Superior Performance, (Milwaukee, WI., ASQC Quality Press, 1989), p.12.

know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles." Sounds a bit like *efficiency and effectiveness* auditing, doesn't it. The results of these inquiries lead generals, engineers, and elected officials to establish benchmarks to mark where they are currently so they can determine where they want to be in some given time frame. In other words, benchmarks are reference points, standards of comparison, based on what we have learned from our experience in doing something that we want to improve upon.

Fortunately, the Japanese have an ancient and simple word that puts all this into perspective. It's *dantotsu*. Dantotsu is striving to be the "best of the best". So, as the overseeing elected leader who wants your local government to be the best of the best, we suggest you stand up at the next governing body assembly and shout, **"Dantotsu!"** If nothing else, it will get everyone's attention so you can discuss just how important the overseeing competencies are to your local government.

A task oriented reflective opportunity

Take a few minutes and review the short rodent control case study we discussed before getting sidetracked on benchmarking, or *dantotsu*. Look for examples of how various competencies covered in this series will be used to carry out this project.

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Based on your elected experience and rodent encounters, jot down some other performance measures you might have wanted the staff to use to establish a base for conducting a later audit of the staff's implementation performance.

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> *As fast as laws are devised, their evasion is contrived.*
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> **German proverb**

Auditing can be a flawed process: Audits are the most visible evidence in most local governments that the overseeing responsibilities are being taken seriously. And yet, audit reports are never firm evidence that the rule of law is alive and well in your local government. As this was being

written, the London *Financial Times* had a long feature article on the corporate scandals in Western Europe and the United States. The focus of the reporting was on the failure of the mandatory external auditing processes that were in place to help corporations deal more effectively with corruption and mismanagement. In all the corporate cases highlighted in the article, their independent auditing initiatives failed. There is an old Persian proverb that says, *Trust in God, but tie your camel.* To paraphrase this sage advice, Trust your auditors, but check their data and their conclusions. Better yet, find those mistakes before they do.

An overseeing checklist to consider: The Urban Institute many years ago published a workbook on ways to improve financial management in local governments. Among the tools they included in the workbook was a checklist on auditing. With a few modernisations, here are the questions they thought were useful to ask.[134]

A Checklist of Your Local Government's Auditing Practices	Yes	No
1. Is your local government's (LG) accounting system and its records and procedures audited annually by an independent and qualified team of specialists?		
2. Does your LG retain qualified auditors on the staff or on a consulting basis to conduct periodic in-depth reviews of the financial operations of selected activities?		
3. Does your LG have an ongoing capability to conduct audits on the effectiveness of your programmes and services?		
4. Does your LG have an ongoing capability to conduct audits on the efficiency of your programmes and services?		
5. Has a procedure been established to respond to financial and performance audits to ensure that there is adequate feedback into the budgeting process?		
6. Is a detailed written scope of work prepared in advance of each audit?		
7. Do those who are preparing the budget propose areas for inclusion in financial and performance audits?		
8. Does the annual independent audit provide for an assessment of the adequacy of your LG's accounting system and related internal controls?		
9. Is there a capability for carrying out periodic audits of specific programmes and services when need?		

Clean the pipes while it is still good weather.

Russian proverb

A reflective opportunity

Think about your own local government's auditing practices. Are they adequate? Are the reports taken seriously by the governing body? What

[134] Hayes, Frederick, et al, Linkages: Improving Financial Management in Local Government, (Washington, DC, The Urban Institute, 1982), pp. 19-20.

could be done to make audits of the kind just discussed a more important part of your local government's efforts to fulfil its good governance responsibilities?

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We now want to explore some of the territory between these two ends of the overseeing continuum.

Other overseeing opportunities

Overseeing is both a policy and a state of mind.

Floradale proverb

The next part of this discussion about your overseeing competencies will cover a variety of overseeing issues and concerns that don't necessarily fit together but are important to consider as an elected official. They include niche-type audit opportunities we believe are important; ways to include citizens as overseeing watchdogs; and using communication as a proactive overseeing strategy

Niche audits: In addition to the financial, efficiency, and effectiveness audits, consider the following more targeted investigations:

❑ **Policy Audits:** Ask your staff to assemble the policy statements that have been adopted by your governing body over the years. Weed out those that no longer have relevance, update those that may reflect governing principles that are no longer appropriate, and look for voids in your policy-making competencies that may need to be addressed. One of the authors worked for a local government many years ago that had over 1500 ordinances or policy statements on the books. Many were contradictory, others were no longer relevant, and a few were counter-productive given changes in the size and complexity of the municipality. It pays to have a policy-cleaning event every few years.

❑ **Participatory audits:** How deep is your local government's commitment to citizen participation? A review of policies, programmes, services, and other governing and management activities such as the budgeting process in relation to citizen engagement is a healthy initiative to be undertaken every three to five years. In the spirit of civic engagement, appoint a citizens ad hoc group to undertake the audit. Provide them

with a scope of work, a deadline, and the resources needed to carry out the audit.

❑ **Equity and inclusiveness audits:** How do your local government's programmes and services measure up on the good governance principles of equity and inclusiveness? This would be a good project for senior high school or college students to undertake under the guidance of a governing body sub-committee or other such arrangement that might be more locally acceptable.

❑ **Gender Audits:** What is the status of women's equality in your local government? Do women and men have equal access and decision making in terms of employment, wages, physical planning and land-use, economic planning and the municipal budgetary process? To assess the accessibility and equity of your local government consider utilizing tools such as "gender audits." A gender audit is a tool for analyzing mainstream public policy, including legislation, regulations, allocations, taxation and social projects, from the point of view of their effect on the status of women in a given society. The basic assumption of gender audits is that public policy impacts differently on men and women. The variance stems from the different roles of women and men in the family and society and from the lower economic status of women. The purpose of gender audits is to lead to changes in public policy that contribute to gender equality and equity.

The International Labour Office (ILO) began conducting its first Gender Audit in October 2001. Using a participatory and self-assessment approach to promote organizational learning about gender mainstreaming, the main objective of the audit was to promote organizational learning at the individual, work unit, and office levels on how to effectively implement gender mainstreaming in the policies, programmes, and structures of the Secretariat of the ILO. You can find out more about the ILO's gender audit at: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/genderresources.details?p_lang=en&p_resource_id=171

The Greater London Authority provides a good example of what a gender equality action plan resulting from a gender audit might look like. You can check it out at: http://www.london.gov.uk/gla/publications/equalities.jsp#ges

❑ **External partnerships and venture audits:** While formal contracts with non-local government organisations should be included in the annual financial audit, often they are overlooked or excluded. This type of audit could look at the nature, extent, and quality of contracted services, public-private partnerships, and even the potential for more private

[135] Bushell, Sue, Covering Your Assets, CIO, Australia's Magazine for Information Executives, January, 2004, p.21.

sector involvement in your local government activities.

❑ **Asset management audits:** Many local governments pay little or no attention to asset management as an integral part of their governance process. And yet fixed assets make up a sizable percentage of every local government's portfolio of investments. The Australian Auditor-General reported not long ago that more than 600 computers had turned up missing from federal agencies. In the same report he revealed that millions of dollars in government real estate had also gone missing over a thirteen-year period due to shoddy record keeping.[135] It may be time to ask your management staff to conduct a fixed assets audit.

❑ **Human resource management (HRM) audits:** Since the highest percentage of most local government budgets is allocated to personnel costs, or human resources, it's important to run inventory and maintenance audits on your local government's HRM systems. The inventory audit will tell you how many individuals are allocated to do what duties within the organization. It may even turn up phantom employees. One African city was able to trim over one thousand employees from the payroll a few years ago as a result of such an audit. The payroll included dead people, lots of live but otherwise absent relatives, and individuals who showed up only on payday. Just as important is the need to assure that your human resources are allocated efficiently and effectively (those key words again!) to implement your governments policies, programmes, and services.

The HRM maintenance audit should look at such factors as: job performance measures; professional and skill development programmes and opportunities; reward systems including compensation, fringe benefits, promotion and advancement strategies; and initiatives designed to assure that all employees understand how their job is linked to the vision, mission, and operating policies of your local government.

HRM audits can also assist in assessing the diversity of your municipal staff. For example, does the municipal staff reflect the population diversity of your larger community in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religious affiliations, etc.? Is there equity in hiring polices and procedures?

❑ **Navigational audits:** Does your local government have a clearly stated vision about what it wants to accomplish and be known for by future generations? Does it have a strategic plan by which it navigates to fulfil that vision? Is that strategic plan supported by goals, objectives, and priorities that are spelled out in operational terms so achievements can be measured and those who are responsible for their

implementation held accountable? If your local government doesn't know where it is going, you will never know if you are on the right track or whether or not you have arrived. As elected officials you are responsible for navigating your local ship of state. If you aren't sure where your local government is going, or how it will get there, it's time to conduct a navigational audit.

❑ **Vulnerability audits:** This is an audit to determine where your local government is most vulnerable to potential corruption, whether you have systems in place to deal with these potential corrupting forces, and if you do, are they working effectively to curb corruption. Some areas of local governance and management are more vulnerable to corruption than others. For example, issuing of licences and permits of all kinds, contract awards, code enforcement, purchasing, law enforcement, political appointments, privatization initiatives, and more. We suggest you convene a working session to explore those areas where your local government could be most vulnerable to corruption. Invite yourselves as elected leaders, a cross section of public managers and workers who are involved in areas of governance that are potentially the most vulnerable to corruption, and a cross section of citizens who might be likely victims of potential corruption in your local government. Working with a professional group facilitator, develop a list of the most vulnerable areas where corruption might be a problem, brainstorm options for dealing with them, and develop an implementation plan to reduce your local government's vulnerability to corruption.

❑ .... Add any types of investigations that we missed that you believe are important.

A reflective opportunity

We have thrown out a number of ideas about auditing that may be very different from your current thinking of the elected official's overseeing role and responsibilities. Take a few minutes to review the various kinds of audits we have suggested and jot down some thoughts on ones that you think might be important for you and your colleagues to consider adding to your overseeing competencies.

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Neutral men are the devil's allies.

E. H. Chapin, 19th Century American clergyman

Citizens as overseers

The most important and effective overseeing tool that citizens have is the ballot box. They can say that your service as an elected official stinks and vote you out of office. Fortunately, there are other ways to develop their *overseeing* competencies. Here are just a few.

❑ **Citizen charters:** In Mumbai, India, a local NGO developed a citizen's charter to help improve the performance of public service providers. The charter developed as a joint venture between the municipal staff and citizens outlines the rights and duties of citizens, clarifies channels for citizens to express their needs and expectations, and provides for periodic surveys of service performance by the municipality. In other words, it is a citizen initiated effectiveness audit.

❑ **Citizen report cards:** A report card system on local government services was introduced in Ahmedabad, India, to map trends in service delivery and performance and user satisfaction on an on-going basis. It is another example of a citizen driven performance audit.

❑ **Ombudspersons:** Ombudspersons are neutral third party citizen advocates who assist people to get answers to their complaints or unanswered requests. While they are most often employed by governments, their credibility is in their ability to get answers for citizens and to get actions by their public servants.

❑ **Action centres:** While one could argue that an action centre set up by the local government is not an example of "citizens as overseers", it all depends on your perspective. Action centres where people come to get answers to their complaints and requests only work when they are driven by citizen initiatives. Often local governments that operate action centres provide feedback to citizens on the actions their government has taken to fix the problem that prompted the citizen complaint. This may, in fact, represent a faster response than what many financial audits get after being submitted by overseeing committees of the elected body.

Communication as a proactive overseeing resource

Overseeing as an elected official competency isn't all reactive as the discussion might lead you to believe. There are ways to provide "preventative" oversight. Most are effective communication strategies so they probably fit more neatly into that competency discussion. Nevertheless, here are some short examples of proactive overseeing.

❑ **One stop service centres:** The Mayor of Niksic, Montenegro, set up a one stop service centre in the foyer of city hall to help citizens get help on securing various kinds of permits, information on who to see on the city staff about any kind of problem or request, and generally to provide feedback to the city on its level of service performance. It provided citizens with a forum not only to get service but to provide the city with individual oversight reporting.

❑ **State of the City Addresses:** If your mayor or governing body chairperson is not giving a "State of the Municipality" address either with the formal presentation of the budget or at the beginning of the new year, she is missing a golden opportunity to summarize information of the local government's financial health and other key performance criteria. If it's not part of your good governance oversight responsibilities, enact a policy that makes it mandatory. Citizens have a right to know what the state of their local government is.

❑ **Advisory committees:** Committees, boards, and commissions of all kinds can be a proactive way to address oversight responsibilities. They can be ad hoc based on specific concerns or long standing entities.

❑ **Public meetings:** It is not unusual for elected men and women, committees of the government body, or the entire government body to hold public meetings and discussions. These meetings can be organised and conducted to get feedback, to inform, or to establish dialogues with citizens or particular interest groups.

❑ .... Add your own ideas about ways to be more proactive in your overseeing responsibilities.

Overseeing, implementation gaps, and trust

We've covered a wide range of issues and concerns under the overseeing umbrella. Corruption, the traditional financial and compliance audit role and responsibilities, a short dissertation about effectiveness and

efficiency and how audits can be wrapped around these good governance principles, and a *potpourri* of offbeat ideas to enrich your *overseeing* competencies. We want to end the discussion by looking at two quite different issues that are associated with the *overseeing* competencies. The first is the vague line that elected officials and local government managers draw between policy making and administration. We want to explore some ways to avoid implementation gaps and to make your overseeing duties more fruitful. The second is the matter of trust between overseers and the overseen.

Laying the foundation for successful implementation

❑ **Remember, policy making is often easier than implementation.** This may be the biggest reason why implementation gaps develop and persist. Policy discussions that do not consider the cold realities of what it will take to carry out programmes and services are bound to lead to follow-through problems.

❑ **Before any policy or programme can be implemented successfully, there needs to be a strategy for implementation.** A strategy might be defined as a set of actions devised to achieve a policy goal. If it is a simple initiative, the strategy may evolve out of a few meetings with the local government's chief executive and department heads. At other times it may require a lengthy set of discussions and negotiations to prepare the organization to take on new responsibilities.

❑ **Policies are often under-resourced.** The lack of adequate resources often results in policies becoming "underachievers" when they reach the implementation stage of development. While the lack of funds often creates the performance discrepancy between policy and implementation, more money may not be the only answer. The need for additional staff and staff development can also be performance barriers. Many local governments believe they can expand their programmes without expanding their staff's ability to deliver. Often new policies require new employee knowledge, skills, and attitudes if they are to be implemented successfully.

❑ **Operating and maintenance costs are often under funded.** The long-term costs of operating and maintaining new capital programmes and services are so often overlooked by local governments that they have become a major embarrassment, not only to these local governments, but to funding

institutions such as the World Bank. Developing countries have some of the world's most exotic junkyards. We have seen scores of motor pools where expensive equipment sits idle. Vehicles are wrecked because employees aren't trained to operate them. Others are "cannibalized" to obtain spare parts that aren't available at the time. Local governments aren't always to blame for these difficulties. Donors often make equipment available but ignore the need for training in its operation and maintenance.

❑ **Often those responsible for implementing new programmes and services are not sufficiently involved in the planning process.** Developing staff understanding about new ventures and gaining their commitment to them must come at the beginning of the planning/policy-making process.

❑ **The same is true of programme or service recipients.** As new initiatives are planned, don't ignore the recipients of your efforts, the customers. Community participation can enhance the planning and development of new initiatives. They can also help in the monitoring and evaluating process if properly trained and organized.

❑ **Provide for staff and organization development.** While new skills or knowledge may not be essential to undertake new initiatives, there may be attitudes within the staff that could slow or block implementation. Many local governments have used team building as a means to overcome these kinds of barriers to performance. Individual and organization development interventions can be critical to successful implementation.

❑ **Effective overseers need a monitoring system to track performance.** An effective monitoring strategy will probably include both quantitative and qualitative measures. Sometimes lending agencies and agency staff members get overly enthusiastic about the kinds of indicators they want monitored. Collect only the data and information you need to track the progress of policies or programmes being implemented. Involve those who will be responsible for implementation in the monitoring discussions and decision process.

Review your monitoring and evaluation system from time to time to see if it is providing the information and insights you need to operate the programme. Try to isolate the monitoring and evaluation process from both political and managerial interference. Maximize the amount of attention given to performance data. While looking at the internal processes of implementation is important, it is critical that you know whether you are achieving the expected outcomes.

Overseeing

❑ **Everyone with a significant role in implementation needs to understand the goals and strategies of the new initiative including their own roles and responsibilities, and they must be committed to carrying them out.** If understanding and commitment are not in place before you start implementation, take whatever time is needed to reach this state before moving on.

You may be saying that many of these issues have nothing to do with your overseer role and responsibilities as an elected official and everything to do with policy making. Yes and no. Yes, because they should be considered very early in any policy discussion on new venture development. No, because they will come to haunt you in your overseer role if they aren't addressed before implementation begins. Effective planning during the policy and programme development phases will greatly facilitate the overseeing responsibilities.

Overseeing implementation

If you have followed many of the suggestions outlined above, you should be in an excellent position to conduct routine monitoring and evaluation efforts. Here are some thoughts on how to be more effective in your overseer role once implementation is underway.

❑ **Get involved, but not too involved.** The two greatest challenges in carrying out your overseer role as an elected official are over-involvement and under-involvement. Those of you who tend to get over-involved begin to undermine the staff's authority and responsibilities for implementation. Under-involvement is often seen by staff as either disinterest, non-support, or a license to stray from the mandates of the governing body's initiative. Both extremes of overseer behaviour can impede the implementation process.

❑ **Recognize the need for flexibility and inevitable adjustments during implementation.** It is virtually impossible to envision every contingency that will visit the implementation of new policies and programmes. Be prepared to help the implementing staff or organisation adjust to the emerging realities of operation.

❑ **Make room for the ambiguity that resides in the grey zones between policy and administration.** There is more interdependence between the elected leadership and the administrative staff than either side likes to admit. Try to be comfortable with the zone of ambiguous feelings, messages, and actions that separate your respective territories. Negotiate

the uncertainties that threaten to slow or sidetrack your efforts to move projects and programmes forward.

❑ **Decide how you're going to resolve differences before they develop.** Conflict is inevitable with new ventures and a healthy sign that progress is being made and people are thinking in alternative ways. Given its inevitability, plan on how you will manage conflict in your overseer role and help others manage it in your absence.

Being competent as an overseer means you never cut what you can untie.

Floradale proverb

Overseeing and trust

We want to end this discussion of your *overseeing* competency by looking at a somewhat intangible and hard to measure quality that nevertheless is key to the fulfilment of your overseeing responsibilities. **Trust!** Most local governments around the world are facing a crisis of approval and legitimacy from their citizens as well as other societal institutions. People are cynical about local governments' abilities to be effective, efficient, and accountable to name just three of the good governance principles. They see many local governments as broken and in desperate need of repair. At the heart of some of these perceived problems is the need for more oversight by the elected officials. It's not a magic elixir, but when it is joined with your other competencies, it can begin to pinpoint various ways your local government is falling short of expectations. But, effective overseeing is dependent on trust between the overseeing and the overseen. Let's explore this human quality to see how it fits into the good governance principles and your overseeing roles and responsibilities.

David Carnevale in *Trustworthy Government* says trust is essential. "Trust is what holds the social fabric of organisations together. Trust is an essential part of community. No social system can operate effectively without some measure of mutual faith among members."[136] The overseeing responsibilities of elected officials are often about making inferences about the motives of the staff of the local government for acting in a certain way. In many ways, those who are being overseen need to trust that the overseeing process will be fair and ethical. For the overseers, they need to trust that those being overseen will be open and forthcoming in sharing information and ideas about how to improve performance or whatever it is that is being audited.

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[136] Carnevale, David, Trustworthy Government (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishing, 1995), p. 4.

Building trust is a reciprocal endeavour. It only works when everyone involved in any human transaction trusts all others who are involved. The weaving of this essential social fabric we are calling trust or mutual faith in one another doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and unfortunately can be damaged very easily when any one of the persons involved takes the position that someone else can't be trusted.

Let's put this in the context of the overseeing competency. As the overseer, you may either say or think, "I don't *trust* the staff. I don't trust them to tell the truth. They are bound to keep information from us. I really don't *trust* them to be open with us." And on the other side of that overseeing relationship, the managers and employees are thinking or saying, "I don't trust these audits; they're nothing but witch hunts. You can never *trust* a politician to tell the truth." Sound familiar? Unfortunately, the nature of the overseeing role and responsibilities tends to bring out these attitudes and behaviours.

Here are some things the overseers and the overseen can do to make this important public duty and responsibility more positive, productive, and trustworthy.

❑ Don't prejudge the situation or the motives of those involved.
❑ Build problem solving relationships across the boundaries between overseeing and being overseen.
❑ Use your best communicating skills of active listening and asking non-judgmental, open-ended questions.
❑ Collaborate in developing the overseeing agenda and follow-up actions.
❑ Appeal to each other's higher order competencies. Use your collective strengths to gather and analyse information that is essential to the overseeing tasks.
❑ Be willing to discuss the "undiscussable" if necessary. If there is corruption in the system, try to understand what is feeding it and collaborate to find ways to overcome it. Remember C=M+D-A.
❑ Recognise that conflict is probably inevitable in the overseeing process. Welcome it for its important contributions and handle it in decent and ethical ways.
❑ Accept the legitimacy of those involved in the overseeing process.
❑ Be fair in meting out rewards and punishments that may result from the overseeing process. Audits are not just opportunities to find fault. They are also opportunities to celebrate success.
❑ Demonstrate respectable assumptions about the motives and ability of others.
❑ Focus on the importance of shared learning and inquiry.
❑ Reach out and involve others who might be able to contribute knowledge, insights, and skills to the process.
❑ Keep promises and honour obligations.

- Open doors for individual and institutional development. This is the most important contribution the overseeing process can make.
- Overseeing is designed to build the institutional and human resource wealth of your local government, not to destroy it.
- Successful overseeing depends on mutual trust and honest, caring, and open inquiry.[137]

I tore myself away from the safe comfort of certainties through my love for truth; and truth rewarded me.

Sylvia Ashton-Warner, 20th Century New Zealand educator

A reflective opportunity

We have covered a lot of territory in this brief overseeing journey. Before we try to summarise the key points of the *overseeing* competency, we invite you to reflect on what you think has been the most important thing you have learned from this discussion. Go back to the beginning and review what you have just read. Then jot down those insights and why you think they have been important to the development of your *overseeing* competencies.

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Key points

- The *overseeing* competency covers a wide range of possible issues, concerns, options, and strategies.
- They run all the way from doing the mandatory financial and compliance audits to the possibility of having to oversee corruption.
- Like all the competencies, overseeing has a number of key linkages with good governance principles, including civic engagement, openness, transparency, the rule of law,

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[137] Many of these insights were gleaned from David Carnevale's writings on Trustworthy Government. Thanks, David.

efficiency, effectiveness, and the all-important accountability.

❑ While corruption is endemic in all societies and institutions, local governments are particularly vulnerable so they require an added measure of overseeing scrutiny.

❑ Just in case there is any confusion, corruption is the misuse of entrusted power for private gain.

❑ Corruption (C) equals monopoly power (M) plus discretion by officials (D) minus accountability (A) or C=M+D-A.

❑ Local governments around the world have had success in applying this formula but nothing is foolproof when dealing with corruption. Among other things, it has a tendency to grow back in the best reformed governments.

❑ The financial and compliance audit is probably the best known and most often used overseeing responsibility of elected bodies. It is usually mandated by law and requires the efforts of an independent entity.

❑ The Government Accounting Standards Board in the United States has issued a set of standards that are worth looking at in other countries, particularly since it provides much more openness and accountability from local governments than standard financial audits.

❑ Effectiveness and efficiency audits are rarely mandated but important to consider. They provide opportunities for significant staff and citizen involvement in the overseeing process.

❑ Auditing can be a flawed process as witnessed by so many corrupting practices in private corporations and public institutions where the auditing process has failed to provide discipline and positive results.

❑ Think about doing audits on your local government policies, opportunities for participation, equity and inclusiveness, assets, and external partnerships.

❑ Citizens need to be involved as partners in your overseeing responsibilities. Tools to use include citizen charters, report cards, ombudspersons, and action centres to name a few.

❑ Communication is another important but underutilised overseeing resource. Think of using one-stop service centres, advisory committees of all kinds, public meetings, and the media to help oversee your public domain.

❑ Overseeing obviously involves your local government organisation and staff. Lay the foundation for collaborative overseeing ventures with your managers and staff to keep implementation gaps from occurring between policy making and the overseeing role.

❑ Overseeing implementation is a complex business of learning how to make a point without making an enemy.

❑ Effective overseeing is based on trust between the overseeing and the overseen.

The obvious is that which is never seen until someone expresses it simply.

Kahlil Gibran

So it is with much of what happens on the overseer's watch.

Chapter 12:
The Institution Building Competency

Introduction

Definitions enclose a wilderness of ideas within a wall of words.

Samuel Butler, 17th Century English poet

Institution building (IB) as a principle, concept, and strategy is difficult to define. It is even more difficult to do. Unfortunately, institution building as a development approach is often confused with such strategies as management training, staff development, and the collection of goods called "capacity building". You probably noticed that just about anything an international or bilateral development agency does these days is called capacity building. While all these types of developmental initiatives can contribute to individual and organisation development, they fall short of what we believe to be the essence of IB.

As we look back on our efforts to describe this elected leadership role and responsibility in the first edition of these chapters, we realize that we missed the mark. At that time, we defined *institution building* primarily as developing and securing the management and operational capacities and competencies of the local government organisation. While this is important, it belies the more significant elected leadership challenge of building local *governance* institutions. Effective use of your institution-building competencies should not only help your local government withstand interim setbacks due to any number of human foibles, but help it sustain the level of citizen support and legitimacy that is essential to good governance.

To gain a perspective on the competency of institution building, we need to go back briefly to the genesis of the movement that invented this term. Even those who were at the forefront of this emerging development strategy wrestled with the terminology they had created. One of their main concerns was the use of the word "institution." It's a concern we need to look at more closely if we are to understand just what institution building is all about.

Those who direct the Global Campaign on Urban Governance remind us that *governance is not government.* And those who invented institution building were saying that *organisations are not institutions.* Like we said in the beginning, institution building is a bit complicated. This is one reason why we didn't get it right the last time around. So bear with us as we take a short detour into the history of this competency.

Institution building as a concept and operational strategy is rooted in international development initiatives that took place in the 1960s. Milton Esman, one of the pioneers in those outreach initiatives, defined institution building as a process for "planning and guiding *organisations* which induce and protect innovations, gain support, and thus become viable in their

societies."[138] Immediately, this definition raised the question of the differences between institutions and organisations. One of Esman's colleagues, no doubt sensing the confusion, explained.

> An institution is more than an organisation and more than a cultural pattern. It attracts support and legitimacy from its environment so that it can better perform its functions and services...An organisation becomes an institution when it succeeds in being valued by others as important and significant...While all institutions are organisations of some sort, not all organisations are institutions.[139]

These distinctions are important when we turn the spotlight on governing bodies and local governments as "institutions." When local governments and their governing bodies cease to be seen as institutions that garner respect, support, and legitimacy from their citizens, they lose their ability to lead. Given this critical perspective, your *institution-building* responsibilities as a governing body are not only confined to developing your local government as a service delivery organisation. When institution building is put into this larger perspective, it may become the competency that defines your governing body's lasting legacy.

To paraphrase a rather obscure nineteenth century diarist by the name of Henri Amiel, *Only institutions grow wiser; they store up the collective experience; and from this experience and wisdom those who serve these institutions later on find not their natures changing but rather their experiences.*

As we move on from this rather long introduction to the *institution-building (IB)* competency, we want to alert you to the scope of your institution-building responsibilities as elected officials at least from our perspective. They include your governing body as an institution, your local government organisation as the operating extension of your governance process, and civic institutions essential to sustaining democratic local self-governance principles and actions. These civic institutions include voluntary associations of elected officials representing regional interests and concerns, neighbourhood and professional associations, and various authorities, boards, commissions that are integral to the realisation of good governance at the local level of interaction. To reiterate, IB to be effective needs to include all local governance institutions, your governing body, the local government organisation, and key civic organisations associated with delivering public goods, programmes, and services.

Institution Building

138 Esman, Milton, *Institution Building as a Guide to Action,* Proceedings: Conference on Institution Building and Technical Assistance. (Washington, DC, Agency for International Development, December 1969). P.22.

139 Uphoff, Norman, An Introduction to Institution Building: What is it—What can it do? Proceedings: Seminar on Institution Building and Development. (Katmandu, Nepal, Centre for Economic Development, 1971), pp.23-4.

Institutions govern relationships between people. They are the real pillars of civilisation.

Francois Duchene

Institutions are built and sustained through trust

Institutions are special types of organisations that embody and promote certain values and norms. They are not simply instruments to carry out functional requirements within a community or society although they normally perform these functions as well. If there is one quality that promotes and sustains institutions, it is *trust.* Trust is established when there is confidence in the intentions and actions of others to be fair and ethical in their social exchange relationships. Trust, unfortunately, requires an interdependency that puts all the parties involved in these social exchange relationships in potential jeopardy. Nevertheless, in this mutual vulnerability, we trust that we will not be exploited by others. Trust is the glue that keeps these interdependencies and vulnerabilities in balance.

      When citizens are brought into the budget process, for example, elected officials can feel vulnerable. After all, they are forfeiting some of their decision-making powers. Local citizens, on the other hand, may feel that this is just another way to manipulate them into feeling that they have influence over the process. For participatory budgeting to work effectively, there must be a reciprocation of trust, not just an exchange of words.

As we were writing these words, it occurred to us that an example from our own experience in institution building might be helpful in understanding both the complexity of the competency and the potential it has for making significant contributions to good governance. It also describes an intergovernmental mechanism that you might consider using in your own institution-building initiatives. This case study describes how feuding elected officials from six adjoining communities created a voluntary association of governments to address issues that were defying political boundaries. When they established the Centre Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), they also planted the seeds for building an institution.

CRCOG: A case study in trust and institution building

One of the authors worked for a local government nearly forty years ago that had an untrustworthy relationship with its five neighbouring local governments. The governing body of the largest of these six local governments was so disliked by the elected leaders of the surrounding five townships that it was impossible to convene an official meeting. The area was growing rapidly and these governments, whether or not they were willing to admit it at the time, needed each other. To bring a bit of civility and understanding to their soured relationships, a newly appointed city manager of the largest local government was successful in getting the elected officials to agree on holding a series of informal dialogues. These discussions, involving elected and appointed officials from the six local governments, initially addressed the frustrations that were causing the conflicts. As they slowly established a level of trust, they were able to turn their attention to the problems that poured across their jurisdictional borders. Over time, these elected officials and their local government staffs produced some amazing regional governance results.

In retrospect, their experiences in working together exhibited a number of good governance principles even though these principles had not become common rhetoric among government officials at that time. Since there is a direct connection between institution building as a competency and adherence to good governance principles, we will be calling your attention to them. Let's look at how these elected officials first developed trust among themselves and their governments and then went on to build an exemplary intergovernmental institution that continues today.

Building trust: Although the main local government in the region was much bigger than the others, its elected officials agreed that equity should be considered in decisions that affected two or more of the six local governments. It was a major issue since the largest local government among the six was more than ten times the population of the smallest. Openness

and transparency in their interactions with each other were also established as norms to be honoured. After all, the lack of openness and transparency in earlier encounters had gotten them into some serious intergovernmental messes.

These principles were backed up by practical experience. When they entered into any collaborative venture like the operation of a sanitary landfill, their trust in each other was reinforced by monthly audits of the operation. All local governments were equally represented in these audits regardless of their size and the extent of their use of shared facilities. When this voluntary association of elected officials finally became more formal, the leadership of the Centre Regional Council of Governments rotated among the six participating governments.

Building an institution: Forty years later, CRCOG still operates as a voluntary association of governments to address issues, concerns, and opportunities that challenge the political boundaries that separate their individual governments. Among the services they share are fire protection; parks and recreation; libraries; comprehensive building code enforcement; emergency management; refuse collection, disposal, and recycling; and comprehensive land use planning. A variety of formulas are used to distribute the costs of these services among the six local governments. Each local government is free to opt in or out of each of these services at their discretion. CRCOG is a recognised institution, not just an organisation. It no longer is viewed as an experiment in intergovernmental cooperation.

Lessons to be learned: We mention this experience because it demonstrates the fine art of institution building. While trust among its members is no longer an issue, it wasn't always this way. Suspicions ran deep among all the parties in the beginning stages of collaboration. This mistrust was laid to rest gradually by;

❑ Shared decision making based on individual local governments and not size of governments.

❑ Equitable distribution of costs and benefits based on inputs and outputs.

❑ Open and transparent financial and policy transactions, not only among the elected officials and staff but with citizens as well.

❑ Subsidiarity of authority and resources to achieve effectiveness and efficiencies in the delivery of services. These arrangements included private sector vendors and a variety of public but autonomous entities that function under their own citizen policy boards and management, i.e., the library, parks and recreation, and fire protection.

❑ A commitment to sustainability in all dimensions of development within the region. For example, the most recent operating budget included acquisition and preservation of sixty additional hectares of open space; a programme to eradicate insects that are destroying forests in the region; financial self-sufficiency among the various profit centres

such as solid waste management and code enforcement; and the recruitment of hundreds of volunteers to help operate and sustain important health-related services.

❑ Civic engagement as an integral part of the various regional programmes and services. Hundreds of citizens representing all the six local governments serve on various policy boards, advisory committees, and auditing teams. For example, a new nature conservancy centre was opened recently. It operates under a policy oversight committee of eighteen volunteers who in turn represent a wide range of organisations and interests including the local university, the public school district, a clean water conservancy organisation, the regional planning commission, the county historical society, a private bird watching club, a regional archaeological society, and the regional recreational authority. This enabling strategy of involving a wide range of private, non-profit and government interests provides a broad mandate for this programme. It also helps to keep local governments' operating costs to a minimum. More than eighty percent of the operating funds for the conservancy centre are provided by donations and volunteer services.

A reflective opportunity

Before we leave this case study of intergovernmental cooperation and institution building, take a moment or two and reflect on this council of governments approach. If your government and adjoining governments are not using such a mechanism to share decision making and problem solving across political boundaries, do you think it is a viable option? If so, what are some of the public programmes and services in your region that might be amenable to this kind of intergovernmental arrangement?

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How might you go about introducing such an opportunity to your elected colleagues and those in adjoining local governments?

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The soul and spirit that animates and sustains society is mutual trust.

Robert South, 18th Century English Clergyman

Institution building, good governance, and trust

The Centre Region Council of Governments only became an institution when it succeeded to be valued by others in the community as important and significant. After all, it was borne more out of necessity than a love fest among elected officials. Their motivation in the beginning was to resolve several longstanding disagreements about annexations, essential public services such as water and sewer, and land use planning, particularly transportation planning.

Fortunately, they based their intergovernmental arrangements on a number of the good governance principles, principles that had not been articulated quite so forcefully at that time as they are now. We believe there is a direct connection between institution building and good governance principles. Good governance and institution building processes also rely heavily on interpersonal, intergroup, and inter-organisational skills and competencies. The decisions that drive these two processes are often made in highly complex settings involving actors with widely differing agendas and priorities. The glue that holds the pieces together and makes long term progress possible is trust.

A reflective opportunity

We've been talking about trust as an important quality in any institution building process. Take a moment and thinks about the quality of the trust that exists among the members of your government body. Jot down your comments.

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The quality of trust between your governing body and the staff of your local government organisation:

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Between your local government and your citizens:

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Between your local government and surrounding local governments:

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What might you do to increase the level of trust in one or all of these relationships?

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Institution building and the other competencies

As with other chapters, we not only discussed the importance of the good governance principles to elected leadership but also the importance of melding the various competencies that we have been discussing in this series. The *institution-building* competency is highly dependent on the other competencies as our case study illustrates. Some of these linkages are obvious such as *communicating and facilitating*. For example, it took a lot of active listening in the beginning for all of the elected officials to understand the reasons behind all the mistrust that existed among the local governments in the region. And these complex arrangements have evolved out of numerous meetings that had to be facilitated by various individuals. Currently, there are twenty-four different committees involving more than 240 elected officials and citizens who meet frequently to provide *policy* and management *oversight* to the many programmes and services that operate on a regional basis.

The power dynamics among these six governments has always been interesting and complex given the disparity among their sizes and sophistication. Their *using power* competencies have come in handy as has their negotiating competencies. Both of these competencies are important to institution building particularly as your local government reaches beyond its own borders. And the enabling competency is central to institution building. In the CRCOG case, they enabled hundreds of citizens and dozens of civic organisations to get involved in the shared ventures they undertook. And, of course, the *financing* and *overseeing* competencies are very much a part of

institution building and also evident in the case we just cited. The costs of all services are calculated on three equally weighted elements: population served, assessed value of real property, and earned income tax collections in each of the six local governments. It isn't necessarily easy but equitable. By the way, if anyone is interested in learning more about the Centre Regional Council of Governments, check out their website: www.crcog.net

> *The camel never sees its own hump but its neighbour's hump is ever before its eyes.*

> **Arabian proverb**

Your governing body and institution building

As we said earlier, we want to look at the *institution building* (IB) competency from three different perspectives: 1. your governing body; 2. your local government organisation; and 3. various institutional arrangements between your local government and the community, what we refer to later as your local government's extended family. We are assuming that these are the three most fruitful organisational arrangements in which to invest your IB competencies. We will start in your own backyard by looking at the connections between IB and your governing body. Like the camel, we rarely take a hard look at our own hump. This is an opportunity to do a bit of hump-gazing from an IB perspective.

Earlier we quoted one of the founders in the institution-building movement. According to Esman, institution building is a process of "planning and guiding organisations which induce and protect innovations, gain support, and thus become viable in their societies."

While that definition probably conveyed what international development agencies were doing at the time to strengthen organisations they were working with, it's a bit dated and restrictive for our purposes. We like to think of **institution building** as a *developmental process that helps local governance organisations gain and <u>sustain</u> the respect and support of their citizens based on the merit of local government contributions to democratic self-governance and an enhanced quality of life for all their diverse communities.*

Let's spend a few minutes and break down that rather long definition into some bite size pieces. First, we are talking about IB as a *developmental process.* This suggests a continuing set of activities that strive for increasing higher levels of achievement. By *local governance organisations* we take our clue from the Global Campaign on Urban Governance. Governance by their definition involves a rich mix of public, private, and civil society organizations. Next, the intent of the IB activities is to *gain and sustain citizen respect and support* and to do it on *merit.* And finally, what

merits citizen respect and support are contributions to democratic self-governance and quality of *life improvements.*

Institution building ideas: Here are some ideas about how your governing body can engage in an institution-building process that will fulfil the principles stated in the IB definition.

1. Engage in a learning process that increases your good governance knowledge, skills, and understanding. Congratulations. By participating in this series you should be accomplishing these learning objectives.

2. Hold a half-day work session involving all members of your elected body to assess how well you think your governing body is doing in fulfilling the good governance principles that we have discussed with each of the competencies. It might be useful to invite an external facilitator to work with you and your colleagues to administer the report card and to discuss the results. We have included a report-card-type assessment tool in Part Two to help you carry out this IB competency task.

3. Have your staff prepare and administer the same report card to the local government staff; the officers and key staff of several key community organisations with whom you share governance responsibilities; and a representative sample of your citizens from various gender, ethnic, race, age, and income groups who have a good understanding of your local government and what it does. Instruct your staff to conduct this survey according to accepted survey research methodology. After all, the data from these surveys will become your benchmarks for measuring forward progress on each of the good governance principles. These types of surveys not only gather important information but also enlighten those who respond about the principles of good governance.

4. Have the data analysed according to the various response groups and compiled into a working document. Compare the data from your own assessment as a governing body with data from the various other audiences. This will tell you if you are in sync with your community on your self assessments, too modest about your accomplishments, or "blowing smoke" about what a great job you think you are doing. It's what some might call a reality check.

5. Working with your staff, plan a day-long session with key staff members and representatives from the various groups who participated in the good governance survey. The intent of the work session would be to present the data, discuss it, and come up with an action plan on how to address the most critical good governance issues that have been determined by the data.

6. Hold the work session and make a commitment to follow through on the results.

Who looks outside, dreams; Who looks inside, awakes.

Carl Jung, 20th Century Swiss Psychologist

More IB ideas: The process just described looks a lot like a strategic planning process. However, its emphasis is on an assessment of how *effective* your governing body has been in addressing its good governance principles. This is different from most strategic- planning events. We've used the word "effective" deliberately in describing the process. While effectiveness is one of the good governance principles, we can use it to describe how effective specific programmes are in achieving their stated goals. In a previous chapter, we used Peter Drucker's definition of effectiveness as doing the right things. From the governing body's perspective, effectiveness can be measured as how well your policies and programmes and other initiatives measure up to the global principles of good governance.

Closing the gaps between the principles and the reality of your actions as elected leaders can be done through using your *institution-building* competencies. That's what those first clues we have suggested are all about. Now, just a few more ideas about governing-body institution building.

❑   Work with your staff to conduct an assessment of your policies as they relate to the good governance principles. For example, hiring policies for your local government might include sexist language. Your policies regarding contracts with various kinds of vendors might work against minority firms competing fairly. Since policies are one of the key outputs of elected bodies, they need to be reviewed from time to time in terms of their actual outcomes.

❑   Since you are the *political* body of the local government, it's not unrealistic to think that you might be "too political" in your actions at least from the perspective of others who might like the opportunity to be "more political" once they win the next election. We raise this issue because it is real and because it came up for discussion at the expert group meeting charged with advising on what might be included in this chapter. Terms like *nepotism, political hacks, shady business dealings,* and more were used to describe the process of being "too political." You and your elected colleagues are in the best position to deal with these kinds of behaviour and allegations of political impropriety. If your governing body is to be valued by all citizens as important and significant, which is a sign of being an institution, then issues of political actions that violate the principles of good governance must be dealt with constructively and openly.

❑   Set aside some time to conduct an assessment of the physical spaces in which your governing body operates, i.e., the formal meeting chambers, the ease by which citizens have access to their elected leaders, handicap accessibility, etc. In one city in South Central Africa, we asked if we could sit in on one of the regular council meetings as observers. The only space for citizens and observers was in the balcony which was accessed through a different part of the building. The physical separation made their council meetings appear like spectator sports. The

only advantage for citizens was the potential to dispose of their rotten fruit from a higher vantage point. Take a look at how citizen friendly your physical spaces are from their perspective.

❑ Develop a plan for making future governing bodies more inclusive and representative of your citizens. This sounds a bit like a plan for some of you to work your way out of being elected. If your local government is like most in the world, the governing body has created various authorities, boards, and commissions to help carry out the many responsibilities on managing a complex institution. For example, you might have utility authorities to provide specific services like water or electricity, zoning boards, and planning commissions to name just a few. Carry out an assessment of the makeup of the members on all these extensions to your governance powers and responsibilities. Then check to see how many women, racial and ethnic minorities, low income communities, and others within your local government who have not been or are not currently represented fairly in the business of your local self-governance. These various authorities, boards, and commissions represent valuable opportunities to nurture and build the human capital of your community to eventually take your places on the governing board.

The opportunities to engage in institution-building activities that focus on your own institution as the governing body are virtually endless. We leave this part of the IB discussion with an opportunity for you to weigh in with your ideas.

A reflective opportunity

If your governing body is viewed by your citizens as being an institution because it succeeds in being valued as important and significant, what are those qualities that have made it so?

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Which of these qualities do you think might be in jeopardy at this time?
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The fox that waited for the chickens to fall off their perching place died of hunger.

Greek proverb

Your local government organisation and institution building

One of your major institution-building responsibility as a governing body is to assure that your local government organisation has the overall capacity to carry out policies, programmes, services, and other directives in accordance with good governance principles. Capacity is only one dimension of this part of your institution-building challenge. Capacity is also dependent on the **will** and the **motivation** of all your local government employees to actually do all the things you expect them to do. It's one thing to possess the capacity to do something. It's another thing to do it and to do it to the best of your ability and willingly. Your institution-building competencies as applied to your local government organisation should strive to give it "institution" status. Can you say with confidence that:

❑ Your local government organisation is valued by **all your citizens** as important and significant in their daily lives?

❑ And your local government organisation and its employees garner respect, support, and legitimacy from **all your citizens?**

If not, then you may want to make institution building a high priority in developing the *ability* and *will* of your local government organisation and staff to perform according to acceptable standards of performance..

We debated whether it is realistic to put the qualifier of **all your citizens** in these questions. "All" is, well, all inclusive. Nevertheless, governance is an inclusive public service and responsibility. When we begin to believe that it's unrealistic that all our citizens will value our local governments for whatever

reason, we begin the subtle process of disenfranchising certain segments of the community. For example, we may not expect street children or certain minority groups who live in the poorer part of our community to respect and support local government. And it may be that we don't expect them to respect and support their local governments because they have already been disenfranchised in one way or another. While "all" may be unattainable, it still needs to be your institution building goals.

Before we get into describing the various components of a comprehensive institution-building strategy, we want to share with you an interesting set of public service values that are quite different from the good governance principles we have been discussing throughout this series. They were developed by the Government of Malaysia for consideration by their civil service employees. They call them the Twelve Pillars of Public Service.

The twelve pillars

I. The value of time.	VII. The influence of examples.
II. The success of perseverance.	VIII. The obligation of duty.
III. The pleasure of working	IX. The wisdom of economy.
IV. The dignity of simplicity.	X. The virtue of patience.
V. The worth of character.	XI. The improvement of talent.
VI. The power of kindness.	XII. The joy of originating.

A reflective opportunity

Consider these twelve pillars as possible values to include in any institution-building initiatives with your local government staff and employees. Select three or four of those you believe might be important and appropriate to include in a staff development programme. For each of these values, jot down a specific institution-building tool you might use to help make it a reality within your local

government organisation. For example, workshops in time management might be used to help employees learn more about valuing their time.

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There's a cost and a promise for every choice we make.

Verna Dozier

A proposed IB strategy for your local government organisation and staff

We said in the beginning of this discussion that applying your institution building competencies as an elected official can be difficult. Part of that difficulty is associated with your roles and responsibilities as the policy-making body and the line that separates elected officials from appointed officials and staff in most local government organisations. We also recognise that some local governments make fewer distinctions between policy and administration particularly in those local governments where some elected officials also have line management responsibilities.

Given these variations in local government structures and legislated mandates, we will leave it up to each individual governing body to decide how best to use your *institution-building* competencies. This doesn't get you off the hook as elected men and women in assuring that your local government organisation engages in institution building. It merely means you need to respect the separation of policy making and administrative roles and responsibilities within your local government when you apply your *institution-building* competencies.

To help you do this, we are going to suggest a diagnostic approach to determining the relative health of your local government organisation. While there are many ways to divide up an operating organisation for diagnosis, we will focus on six key components found in all viable organisations and three sets of linkages essential for interacting with the external environment. The components or variables are:

1. **Doctrine:** the organisation's vision, mission, goals, and objectives. This is your organisation's global-positioning system that tells where you are and how to get to where you want to be.
2. **Leadership:** While it is normal to assume this variable is located at the top of the organisational pyramid, we will challenge this bit of conventional wisdom.

3. **Resources:** The most obvious local government resources are finances and human resources, but there are more to explore in institution building.
4. **Programmes and Services:** This is the "what you do" component, your rationale for existing.
5. **Technologies:** These are the "how-to" mechanisms that are employed by your operating organisation.
6. **Structure:** This describes "who does what with whom" part of the organisation.

These are the internal mechanisms or components of your local government organisation that need to be examined in any institution-building assessment. In addition, you need to look at the linkages, how your organisation interacts with its external environment. We've divided these linkages into three categories for your consideration as institution builders. It will probably not surprise you that we have also made associations between these linkages and the widely recognised standards of public service performance, the good governance principles. While all three linkages can be related to all of the good governance principles, we have made some distinctions about which ones are most critical to each of the three categories of linkages.

1. **Operating linkages.** These are associated most directly with programme and service delivery. *Effectiveness, efficiency,* and *accountability* are the most important good governance principles to apply to these linkages.
2. **Normative linkages.** These are the ideological, ethical, and value-oriented linkages. What are the accepted and expected behaviours and standards of interaction? Principles of *inclusion, equity, openness and transparency,* and obviously the *rule of law* define the normative linkages between your local government and its various constituents.
3. **Enabling linkages.** Through its resources, structure, and technologies, local governments are often able to reach out and "enable" others to become a part of the local self-governing process. We think these linkages are most often associated with the good governance principles of *civic engagement* or participation and *subsidiarity.*

These organisation variables and linkages must all be addressed in any institution building programme. While elected officials and appointed staff and employees each have responsibilities for assuring that these components are addressed in institution-building initiatives, their roles and responsibilities differ. What we have tried to do in the following discussion is focus on the governing body's roles and responsibilities.

Institution Building

Organisation variables

I. **Doctrine.** This is a fancy word for a collection of written documents that assures those who are associated with the organisation and those on the outside looking in that your local government knows what it is doing and has a game plan for doing it. Institution building is very difficult to accomplish if your local government organisation does not have in writing its vision, mission, and a cohesive set of operating goals and objectives. If your local government does not have these documents, then they become one of your first institution building tasks in working with the staff and employees. Here's a short description of what these documents include.

    ❑   A **vision** statement is a description of what your local government would look like if it achieved its full potential. It is future-oriented, inspirational, appeals to high ideals, and points your local government toward the horizon. Admittedly, this description is a bit fuzzy so let's try to envision what it might look like in writing. For example, your vision is to rank among the top ten local governments in your country based on the principles and practices of good governance. This assumes, of course, that there is a national institution that ranks local governments on these standards. If such an institution doesn't exist, extend your institution-building initiatives to create one. This means writing another vision statement but by now you know how to do it.

    ❑   A **mission** statement is a declaration of your local government's purpose for existing. Essentially it's a relatively short statement that says who you are, who you serve, why you exist, what you do to respond to why you exist, the principles that guide you in your responses, and what makes you unique among other organizations.

    ❑   **Goals** and **objectives** are statements about how you plan to achieve your mission. Goals are more global and objectives are more specific. Checkout Chapter Number Six, the *Decision-Making Competency,* on the details of how to write these verbal road maps.

Policies and standard operating procedures are, of course, other doctrine-type documents but start with those listed above in assuring that your organisation is on its way to becoming an institution.

II. **Leadership.** Your governing body obviously has a leadership role, and it needs to be addressed in any institution-building programme. Hopefully, we have covered this aspect of local government leadership adequately in our discussion on the governing body as an institution. From the

standpoint of the local government organisation's leadership, we believe there are at least three IB issues to address.

1. Do the managers and supervisors in your local government organisation have opportunities to engage in professional and self-development learning activities? These opportunities can include management workshops, participation in an academic programme to get a degree or certificate, team-building exercises within work units, or being mentored by a more senior official.

2. Do your organisation managers encourage and support the good governance concept of subsidiarity? In other words, do they delegate authority and responsibility to the closest appropriate level consistent with efficient and cost-effective delivery of services? Leadership isn't just the purview of those who hold the title of leader, manager, or supervisor. Leadership can be exercised at all levels of the organisation. Leadership is not just a title; it's a state of mind. The policewoman or man who is patrolling the neighbourhood can exercise leadership. So can the public health nurse who is managing a HIV-AIDS clinic. When we make the opportunities for leadership all-inclusive in our organisations, we increase the potential that all the citizens will see their local government as both important and significant.

3. Does your organisation engage in something called succession planning? In other words, is there attention given to staff retirements, turnovers, and other situations that will leave voids in the capacity of your local government's ability to sustain its level of performance in all areas of operation? By engaging in succession planning, your management not only assures there will be no breaks in delivering programmes and services, it also provides opportunities for promotion from within.

III. **Resources.** Financial resources are your local government's second most important resource. Just about everything you need to know about finances and institution building is in Chapter Number Ten, *The Financing Competency,* so we won't belabour this resource here. Now, we expect that some of you have that curious look on your face that says, "Second most important resource?" In case you haven't figured it out, your local government's human capital is its most important resource.

From the perspective of institution building and human resource development, your elected leadership roles and responsibilities are to establish standards and policies for human resource management and development, to provide the resources essential to carry out these functions, and to apply your overseeing competencies to what is happening in human resource management and development. While many of the key personnel or human resource decisions will be made

jointly between the governing body and the staff, there is a definite policy-management demarcation line that runs through the middle of this institutional variable.

Before we leave the challenge of human resource management and development, we want to call your attention to the UN-HABITAT series on *Building* NGO/CBO *Capacity* and particularly the manual on *Managing and Developing Human Resources.* It deals with the full range of activities associated with institution building from the perspective of your organisation's human resources. Check out their website for more details at www.unhabitat.org

One of the biggest potential areas of conflict between elected officials and local government managers is political interference in personnel matters. It's tempting to want to tell the public works crew to get off their backsides and get to work or to pressure the police chief to hire your brother-in-law. Don't. You might find out that the public works crew had been working non-stop for hours and was waiting for a load of materials to continue their work, or that your brother-in-law has a criminal record he didn't bother to tell you about.

The other significant arena where you can put your institution building competencies to work in garnering resources for your local government is *outside-the-box.* In other words, those unconventional resources we often don't think about since they tend to be a bit un-routine. They include such approaches as enabling others to get involved in helping to carry out various programmes and services; trying to acquire resources from other levels of government; and arranging for cost-sharing with adjoining local governments. These types of resource building initiatives can best be launched from your elected leadership vantage point.

IV. **Programmes and Services.** This is an area of organisation institution building where your governing body has perhaps the greatest influence or should. What programmes and services your local government provides are policy decisions. Who delivers them are also policy decisions. Don't take it for granted that public services must always be delivered by public organisations. Increasingly, local governments are turning to NGOs, community-based organisations, and the private sector for the delivery of services. The first two questions to ask in assessing the range of programmes and services your local government is providing are

    1. Should this programme or service still be offered to our citizens?
    2. If so, what are the alternative delivery options?

The companion set of questions your governing body should be asking about programmes and services are

1. What new programmes and services should our local government be offering citizens of all ages based on changing needs, interests, values, and other criteria?
2. If any, how should they be delivered and by whom?
3. How should they be financed?

Beyond these questions are numerous others. However, the responsibility for getting answers and taking actions often lies with the administrative branch of your local government.

V. **Technology.** This covers a lot of territory, so let's just talk about some of the more obvious institution-building challenges of a technical nature. By technology, we mean equipment and processes or in computer terms, the hardware and software. It's not uncommon to find local governments that lack the basic equipment to carry out routine programme and service responsibilities. The monetary, political, and human costs of not being equipped to conduct local government business effectively and efficiently are often very high.

Your IB role as elected officials in terms of technology is to assure that your local government has the physical and social technology to carry out its mission according to good governance principles. In achieving this institution-building goal, you also need to challenge the introduction of any new technology in terms of the mission and goals of the organisation and to assess its appropriateness given the needs it is designed to address. This is not to be mean-spirited with your staff, but rather to assure there is rigour in making these decisions.

Your governing body also has the responsibility to introduce technological advancements and to ask the staff to conduct research on their potential consequences. Technology isn't all of the hard kind. We can also think of social technology, such as new drug counselling processes or collective bargaining approaches to resolve management-labour disputes.

In all of these technology issues, your role and responsibilities are best summed up in the skill of asking tough questions. Why do we need it? What will it cost? What are the alternatives? How do we know if it fits our needs? Can we farm it out and have it done more effectively and efficiently by someone else? How do you plan to measure the success of the new technology? This part of the IB puzzle is best served when coupled with your communication competencies.

VI. **Structure.** This is an area of IB where you and your elected colleagues can play an important role although again there will be lines beyond which you probably shouldn't go - policy-administration lines, that is. Issues of structure include such things as changing the budget process to allow more citizen participation; opening neighbourhood service

centres, initiating public-private partnerships, realigning or combining operating departments to be more efficient and effective in service delivery, and many more.

These are the variables you need to work with in exercising your *institution building* competencies within your local government organisation. Some are clearly within your domain as elected officials to influence and even take the leadership role in. Others put you in the support cast. It is important to sort these out before you delve too deeply into this elected role and responsibility.

A reflective opportunity

Before we look at the organisational linkages that are inherent in the workings of these organisational variables, take a moment or two and reflect on the variables just discussed.

Which of these organisational components or variables does your governing body spend the most time on and why?

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Which variables do you and your elected colleagues spend the least time on and why?

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What, if any, adjustments do you think should be made in your governing body's attention to these variables in order to strengthen your local government organisation?

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I skate to where I think the puck will be.

Wayne Gretzky, Canadian hockey star

Organisation linkages

Wayne Gretzky in his prime was one of ice hockey's greatest players. His uncanny ability to envision the future position of the puck was one of his greatest strengths. In some ways, the creation of local government linkages as an integral part of the institution-building process is like this. You and your colleagues need to go where you think the community will be in assessing and establishing linkages, particularly the normative and enabling linkages. Let's look at each of the three categories of linkages to explore in more depth your institution-building roles and responsibilities as the governing body.

I. **Operating linkages.** These are the ones more directly associated with programmes and services. They evoke the good governance principles of effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. Of these three principles, efficiency is largely a management responsibility falling largely within the administrative domain of your local government. It is getting the most output for the least input and throughput.

   Effectiveness is clearly a governing body responsibility. Effectiveness is doing the right things. In other words, what mix of programmes and services are "right" for our community at this time and into the future. *Into the future* is a bit like skating to where you think the puck will be. This competency can often be sharpened by forecasting and other scientific methods. Unfortunately, the data to back up future decisions that have to be made in the present are not always available or verifiable. As for assuring accountability, this is more of an overseeing competency, and we encourage you to turn to that chapter for more insights and skills in fulfilling this operating principle as it relates to institution building within your operating agencies.

II. **Normative linkages.** When we think about how best to strengthen the normative linkages between your local government organisation and staff and your citizens and others, we see this more in educational terms. We see a lot of references lately about *learning organisations,* and we believe this strategy which is a norm and therefore a normative linkage deserves a place in your institution building toolkit. Principles of inclusion, equity, openness, and transparency are learned behaviours. While the governing body can adopt these principles, they only become operational when those who are responsible for implementing them understand them and believe in their power as operating strategies and norms. As Rick Ross reminds us, *the primary leverage for organisational learning lies not in policies, budgets, or organisation charts, but in ourselves.*

   While there is often a tendency to want to enforce norms and principles like inclusiveness, equity, and openness within local government organisations, these approaches often encounter resistance. That resistance can be overcome by helping those involved understand why these principles and values are important and what benefits will accrue to whom as a result of their implementation. For governing bodies

to be successful in helping to forge normative linkages between the local government organisation and citizens, they must model the same behaviour within the governing body itself.

The last normative principle of good governance is the rule of law. It is definitely a governing body responsibility to establish and oversee. Implementation is up to those who manage your policies and laws. From an institution-building perspective, those who implement the rule of law should also be part of the process of creating them.

A person has no ears for that to which
experience has given no access.

Friedrich Nietzsche, 19th Century German Philosopher

III. **Enabling linkages.** We have covered these organisation linkages in considerable depth in the chapter on the *Enabling Competency.* Nevertheless, it is important to help your staff and employees understand the advantages of reaching out and enabling others within the community to be involved in implementing local government's programmes and services. Whether it is through contracting to private firms, mobilising neighbourhoods to get involved in service delivery, or having citizens serve on advisory boards that oversee certain operating functions, your management and operating staffs need to be in on the ground floor when these options are being discussed. **Institution building within local government organisations starts from where your staff members are, not from where you think they should be.**

IB and organisation culture

Institution building often runs headlong into organisation culture. Often the good governance principles, values and norms we have been talking about run counter to the norms that are already in place within a local government

I knew I would be facing a difficult task, but I never imagined how grave the situation was...there was nothing that resembled a team. All the people I found looked and acted more like survivors of a wreck than anything else...the degree of institutional decay was such that authority had virtually collapsed in the municipality...corruption was everywhere.[140]

organisation. Many elected men and women find out after becoming a member of the governing body that the local government is corrupt. If they

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[140] Klitgaard, Robert, Ronald MacLean-Abaroa and H. Lindsey Parris, Corrupt Cities, (Oakland, California, Institute for Contemporary Studies, 2000), pp. 4-7.

didn't know it before being elected, they certainly will learn about it soon. When Ronald MacLean-Abaroa took over as the first elected mayor of La Paz, Bolivia, in nearly forty years, he inherited an organisation and staff that was financially and morally bankrupt.

To the mayor's credit he was able to stem the tide of corruption and malaise that had engulfed the local government. He and the team he assembled literally had to rebuild the institution from the ashes of decades of corruption. The organisation he inherited was based on a core set of assumptions, norms and values that not only condoned corruption but had accepted it as a way of life. The organisation's culture reeked of hopelessness and despair for those who had been trapped into a survival career of toting their bosses' corrupt baggage. To paraphrase Mayor MacLean-Abaroa, "Sick institutions seem to evolve into complex and sophisticated corruption machines, with a shape, size, *modus operandi,* and statutory legitimacy 'fit' for corruption."[141] Contrary to what we often like to believe, cultures can be ugly and organisation cultures can be very ugly.

We raise these issues about organisation culture not to discourage you as an institution builder but to alert you to the realities that all organisations evolve their culture over time, and this is where you must begin in your IB initiatives. Roger Harrison says, "Organisation culture is that distinct constellation of beliefs, values, work styles, and relationships that distinguish one organisation from another." Or to put it more simply, "Organisation culture is the way we do things around here." The problem is that we are often victims of the images we have about who we are.

Hopefully the culture of corruption that existed in La Paz, Bolivia, when Mayor Maclean-Abaroa took over, has not invaded your organisation. Nevertheless the culture of your organisation may be based on some faulty and dysfunctional values and norms. While they may not be devastating, as was the case in La Paz, they may present challenges when efforts are made to reorient the organisation towards good governance principles.

In the case of the Centre Region situation we discussed earlier, there was a culture of suspicion and mistrust in the beginning. The IB initiative in that case had to start with dialogues about why we didn't trust each other. In your local government, the organisation's culture might put a high priority of efficiency at the expense of inclusion and diversity, and your governing body wants more of both. For example, the management team may be operating under the "belief" that hiring minorities or women will erode their ability and reputation of operational efficiency or the "belief" that adopting a norm of openness and transparency will only make the management team vulnerable to a hostile press or citizens who have "axes to grind" with the city. These beliefs and working values ultimately become ingrained in the way things are done.

In institution building terms, they have been driven underground where all these kinds of basic operating assumptions can dwell in relative peace. Since assumptions are usually driven underground where they don't

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[141] Ibid, p.33.

have to be examined very often, your institution building efforts will probably have to start in the basement.

> *Local government culture is often mummified by habit and glorified by law.*

<div align="right">**Floradale proverb**</div>

A reflective opportunity

Before we leave our discussion of institution building within your local government organisation, take a moment and describe how you see your own local government organisation's culture. By culture we mean the assumptions, norms, values, working arrangements, and other artefacts that define how your local government does business.

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If you could change one thing about your local government's culture, what would it be?

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Why did you select this particular aspect of the culture for possible change?

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How might you initiate such a change in order for it to be successful?

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Your local government's extended family and institution building

In the beginning we said we were going to look at three areas where you can apply your institution building competencies. The first was your own governing body as an institution, the second was the local government organisation, and the third that collection of organisations, institutions, bodies, boards, authorities commissions, etc. that serve as extensions to your local government. In most of these "extended family members" of your legislatively defined local government, your IB initiatives will be less rigorous. Nevertheless, the IB framework we laid out earlier detailing the organisation variables and linkages can be useful is assessing the competencies of these extended family members particularly if your governing body decides to collaborate with them in substantive ways. Let's look briefly at various kinds of *institutions* your governing body might want to invest its IB competencies in.

- ❏ **Voluntary councils of governments.** These are like the Centre Region Council of Governments we highlighted in the earlier case study. If you have economic, social, physical, environmental, or any other kinds of challenges that spill over your local government's official boundaries with indiscriminate abandon, you might want to form such an association. If you do, the place to begin institution building is not to incorporate immediately but to dialogue about the challenges and the pros and cons of such an association. It's also a good time to bring out the dirty laundry if there is any among the perspective parties to such an association.

- ❏ **National associations of local governments.** Most countries have such associations. Their primary responsibility is to represent the interests and concerns of local governments in relationships with the central government. In spite of their responsibilities, it doesn't mean they are operating effectively and efficiently. If they aren't or they are in need of an institutional assessment, it might be time for you and some other elected colleagues to pick up your IB toolkit and offer some free consultation.

- ❏ **Professional associations of key local government personnel.** If your senior administrative officer, finance director, public works director, or other key department heads and professionals don't have professional associations within your country or region that they can join for personal and professional development, it's another potential client for your IB services.

- ❏ **Local NGOs, CBOs, and small businesses.** With growing emphasis on collaboration, civic engagements, subsidiary arrangements, public-private ventures, neighbourhood governments, regional service delivery mechanisms, and other

such ventures, you may need to establish an informal IB institute to help these extended family members gain the knowledge, skills, and will they need to be viable partners.

Institution building is a competency that begs to be used beyond the borders of your own local government if you believe in the principles of good governance. We've pointed out the importance of various kinds of linkages that are crucial to the well-being of your own local government. When your governing body looks at the operational, normative, and enabling linkages needed to strengthen your own local government organisation as an institution, these assessment ventures will quickly require you to get your IB passport in order. Of necessity, the inward look will require an outward perspective. Institution building can and should be infectious. Infect your neighbours.

If you don't believe in cooperation, watch what happens to a wagon when one wheel comes off.

Early American proverb

IB = [A + W] DD

We want to close this conversation with a formula you might consider enlarging and putting on your office wall. It won't do any significant damage and should prompt questions of *curiosity* and maybe even *seriousity* from your visitors. Such questions, of course, will give you a chance to talk about your institution-building competencies. And, who knows where this might lead. As we said a couple of minutes ago, IB can and should be infectious.

Institutional building is the sum of your *abilities* (A) and will (W) multiplied by democratic dialogue (DD). Your *abilities* are the knowledge, skills, and experience you bring to the institution-building process in applying the principles of good governance; in the competencies we have been covering in this series; and much more. *Will* is your desire to become engaged with others to bring about good governance and to build institutions that will foster good governance. Having a will without ability is frustrating. Having ability without will is hopeless. William McDougall reminds us that *will is character in action.*

But, the competency of institution building needs more than just ability and will to succeed. It also needs the art of democratic dialogue to ignite the ability and will of all those involved in such initiatives. Dialogue is a process of shared inquiry. It is what William Isaacs calls the *fire of conversation.* Dialogue takes the energy of our differences and channels them toward something that has never been created before. The Centre Region

Council of Governments (CRCOG) started not as an organisation but as a series of democratic dialogues among the elected officials from six neighbouring local governments that were feuding with each other. It was not an awesome beginning, but there was willity to engage in an exploration of why they were feuding.

What is democratic dialoguing? It's the ability of leaders to embrace democratic principles in their willingness to engage in the fire of conversation about things of importance to themselves and their constituents. These principles include fairness and equity, even though the ranks and status of those in dialogue may differ. The CRCOG dialogues for example involved a sophisticated local government, a rural township with no professional staff at the time, four other townships of varying fashion, university deans, truck drivers, dirt farmers, and a physician.

Democratic dialogues also include sharing information about yourselves, your organisations, and the situations that divide them; open and transparent decision making; and freedom and autonomy to act in accordance with your convictions and principles.

As we said in the beginning of this discussion, institution building may very well define your legacy as an elected official. It's the competency that has the capacity to turn your local government organisation into an institution that is valued by your citizens as both important and significant in their lives. As they say in China, *The builders are gone, but the great wall stands.*

> *We will be forever known by the tracks we leave.*
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> **Dakota proverb, First American community**

Key points

❑ **Institution building** is a developmental process that helps local governance organisations gain and <u>sustain </u>the respect and support of their citizens based on the merit of local government contributions to democratic self-governance and an enhanced quality of life for all their citizens.

❑ Governance is not government, and organisations are not institutions.

❑ An organisation becomes an institution when it succeeds in being valued by others as important and significant.

❑ The institution-building competency is designed to help local governments become institutions by achieving important and significant status from their various communities.

- ❏ Institutions are built and sustained through hard work and trust.
- ❏ There is a direct correlation between good governance and institution building.
- ❏ Voluntary associations of governments are worth considering when you engage in institution-building activities.
- ❏ Institution building is at its best when teamed with other elected leadership competencies and pursued within recognised standards of good governance.
- ❏ Elected leadership initiatives in institution building should include the governing body, the local government organisation, and various external institutional arrangements between your local government and the community.
- ❏ Governing body efforts in institution building should start with an assessment of success in achieving the generally recognised principles of good governance.
- ❏ Other IB initiatives include an assessment of policies and their correlation to good governance principles, a look at the physical arrangements for engaging citizens during your formal meetings, a hard look at your reputation in relation to unseemly political standards, and plans to make your government body more representative and inclusive in the near future.
- ❏ IB in your local government organisation should include an assessment of six organisation variables and three sets of external linkages.
- ❏ The organisation variables are doctrine, leadership, resources, programmes and services, technologies, and structure.
- ❏ The IB linkages of note are operating, normative, and enabling linkages.
- ❏ Institution building and organisation culture, as conceptual frameworks, share common understandings.
- ❏ Initiatives by elected men and women to help build institutions should also include voluntary councils of governments, local government associations, professional associations of local government professionals, and local NGOs, CBOs, public-private partnerships and regional service delivery organisations.
- ❏ *IB = [A+W] DD: Ability plus Will ignited by Democratic Dialogues, the fires of important conversation.*
- ❏ Institution building is the ability to see things as they are and to challenge them to be everything they can be.

Chapter 13:
The Leadership Role and Competency

Introduction

*You cannot choose your battlefield, the gods do
that for you. But you can plant a standard,
where a standard never grew.*

Nathalia Crane, Early 20th Century American Poet

Leadership. It may be one of the world's most overused word and under-used human attribute. It is a quality that has preoccupied philosophers, kings, scribes, religions, political parties, and just about all of us who, from time to time, hope someone will step forward and take care of the mess that others left behind in our communities, our environment, our country, and our world. It reminds us of that silly little tale about everybody, somebody, nobody, and anybody.

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Once upon a time, there were four people.

Their names were:

Everybody, Somebody, Nobody and Anybody

Whenever there was an important job to be done, Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but in the end Nobody did it.

When Nobody did it, Everybody got angry because it was Somebody's job. Everybody thought that Somebody would do it, but Nobody realised that Nobody would do it.

So consequently, Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done in the first place.[142]

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Does this sound familiar? Probably. When we look at problems of urban poverty, degradation of our natural environments, the millions of homeless children that roam the streets of the world, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, gender inequities, and ethnic and racial conflicts that fester in our midst, we realise that those four people in that silly little tale have in many of our communities become our leaders by default. These conditions also tell us that local elected leadership has never been more important. Fortunately or unfortunately for local governments and their

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[142] Unfortunately, we can't attribute this literary gem to anybody because everybody wanted to claim authorship until somebody said that nobody wrote it.

community-based enablers, many of these most troubling problems can only be resolved from the bottom up - not the top down.

Fortunately, help is on the way. We are encouraged by the numbers of local elected officials, appointed officials and employees, and local governments that have embraced the principles of good governance put forth by multiple international agencies as standards by which to govern. The spotlight is also on corruption and beginning to overcome the darkness of greed that grips so many of our local and national governments and their private collaborators. And, citizens are becoming **enraged** and **engaged.** These are good signs. As Edmund Burke that great 18th century political activist said, "Nobody has ever made a greater mistake than those who do nothing because they feel they can do only a little." We will relate later on an example of how some ordinary people in some difficult circumstances took Burke's advice to heart by turning their lives around through a process of shared leadership within their respective communities. But first, a look at the other things we plan to cover in this capstone learning opportunity.

A preview of coming events

In addition to a case study of good governance and elected leadership in practice, we want to look at some of the paradoxes of elected leadership and good governance, the seemingly contradictory ideas about these two interrelated concepts that often defy common sense. We will also look at some of the more interesting theories about leadership that have emerged in recent years as well as some leadership qualities that fall outside the good governance principles we have woven into all the competency discussions.

Before we begin this final journey into elected leadership territory, we want to remind you of the conceptual framework that has defined our approach to elected leadership. We have assumed that *representation* and *leadership* are the most important roles and responsibilities you have as a local elected official. Representation is the foundation of democratic self-governance, and leadership is the personal commitment, wisdom and actions you bring to your role and responsibility as your citizen's representative.

In between these two foundation and capstone roles and responsibilities are the competencies and skills needed to bring good governance to your communities. We have focused on the ten we believe to be the most important but obviously there are more. As we said in the beginning of this series, your election to public office carries with it the assumption that you are a leader and that you will perform as a leader on behalf of your constituents. This assumption is tested by every decision you make and action you take as an elected man or woman. This final chapter is an opportunity to look again at the big picture of elected leadership and to

assess your own performance as an elected official and leader. We start with a look at some of the paradoxes of local elected leadership.

> *After all, what is a paradox but a statement of the obvious so as to make it sound untrue?*

> **Ronald Knox**

The paradoxes of elected leadership

Your roles and responsibilities as an elected official are full of paradoxes, those seemingly illogical contradictions that are intended to drive you crazy or out of office, or both. For example:

❏ You are expected to represent everybody and yet you often owe your election to the concerted efforts of a few faithful friends and supporters. If you don't cater to their demands, you might not get re-elected so you can represent everyone.

❏ You pride yourself for being decisive and yet many of your key decisions are reflected in formal votes of a collection of you and your elected colleagues that are recorded in meeting minutes that few ever bother to read.

❏ You are expected to believe that sharing your elected powers is not the same as giving them away. All this talk of civic engagement and enabling others seems like leadership in default.

❏ You are expected to be open and transparent in your opinions and actions and still get re-elected. Now that's really illogical!

❏ And then, it becomes apparent that leadership is more about followership than you ever realised when you were thinking about becoming an elected leader.

The paradox of elected leadership really begins to sink in when you realise that your legacy as a local elected leader is largely dependent on the efforts of others. This interdependency of your leadership role is made even more binding with the growing acceptance of civic engagement and widespread participation of diverse community groups as fundamental principles of good governance. Your greatest contributions as an elected leader may never be known to others when you communicate for consensus; negotiate behind the scenes to help the poor; insist on equity for the downtrodden in your community; decide not to run for re-election so a woman candidate can win and bring more gender balance to local governance; and enable others to assume more decision making for their communities.

One need ask only one question: "What for?"
What am I to unify my being for?
The reply is: Not for my own sake.

Martin Buber, 20th Century Austrian born Israeli philosopher

Living with the paradoxes of public leadership is not always comfortable or easy. Charles Handy likens it to walking in a dark wood on a moonless night.

> It is eerie and, at times a frightening experience. All sense of direction is lost; trees and bushes crowd in on you; wherever you step, you bump into another obstacle; every noise and rustle is magnified; it seems safer to stand still than to move. Come the dawn and your path is clear; trees define your path instead of blocking it. The wood is a different place. So will our world look different and less frightening if we can bring light to the paradoxes.[143]

Perhaps because of its paradoxical nature, leadership looms large in the classic writings that define cultures, religions, political and social revolutions, and philosophies through the ages. Bernard Bass, who has written extensively about leadership, says that "myths and legends about great leaders are important in the development of civilised societies...all societies have created myths to provide plausible and acceptable explanations for the dominance of their leaders and the submission of their subordinates. The greater the socioeconomic injustice in the society, the more distorted the realities of leadership-its powers, morality, and effectiveness-in the mythology."[144] One of our challenges in the next few pages is to cut through some of the myth that has defined leadership and find a few gems you can use as an elected leader. We will start by suggesting it may be time to give *leadership* a new name. But first, take a moment to reflect on the paradoxes of your elected leadership experience.

A reflective opportunity

What aspects of your elected roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to the principles of good governance, strike you as being paradoxical? In other words, what are the situations that you believe put you in a double bind of being "damned if you do, and damned if you don't?"

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[143] Handy, Charles, The Age of Paradox, (Boston, MA, Harvard Business School Press, 1994), p.14.
[144] Bass, Bernard, "Concepts of Leadership: The Beginnings" in The Leader's Companion, (New York, The Free Press, 1995), pp. 49-50.

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What have you found most frustrating about these situations?

What do you think you might do to overcome these frustrations?

A paradoxical tale worth repeating Do you remember Robin Hood, that mythical and clever bandit who stole from the rich and gave to the poor? As the story goes, he was captured by the Sheriff of Nottingham on one of his safaris beyond the safety of Sherwood Forest. The Sheriff, who was fond of games and riddles, made Robin Hood a proposition. He told Robin that he was allowed to make one statement. If that statement contained the truth he would be shot through the heart with an arrow set in flight by the Sheriff's best archer. On the other hand, if his statement contained a lie, he would be hanged. After some thought, Robin Hood said, "I am going to be hanged."

Of course the Sheriff was trapped by his own paradoxical proposition to Robin Hood. Whatever he did in response to Robin's statement would be wrong. He created a situation without objective reality or an obvious answer. We suspect there are times when you feel like the Sheriff of Nottingham.

Stewardship: Trading your kingdom for a horse

Arrange whatever pieces come your way.

Virginia Woolf, 20th C English novelist

Peter Block in his reflections on leadership within formalised settings like organisations and governments suggests we change the context and language of this thing we call *leadership*. He takes part of his argument from the pages of *governance*, something we have been talking about throughout this series. The other part of his conceptual reorganising tosses the term leadership aside in favour of *stewardship.* What Block has to say about stewardship, and by inference leadership, is germane to our discussion. It also sheds some important light on the paradoxes mentioned earlier.

Peter Block starts his discussion of stewardship with a line from Shakespeare's play Richard III. Dismounting from his horse in the middle of a battle where his life hung in the balance, the self-centred and inhumane king cried out, "My horse! My horse! My kingdom for a horse!" While this is a dramatic statement about the paradoxes of leadership, have you ever thought about trading in your seat on the governing body for something a bit less demanding? Or trading in your *leadership* role for *stewardship* status? Let's see what that might look like.

According to Block, *governance* as a term recognises the political nature of our lives and our communities. It is a process by which we redefine the purpose of our communities, determine who holds power, and how the wealth of our communities can be balanced to include all citizens not just the privileged few. Stewardship is the fulcrum by which we can leverage a more inclusive governance. Block says:

> Stewardship, as a set of principles and practices, has the potential to make dramatic changes in our governance systems. It is concerned with creating a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for outcomes at the extremities of our communities. It means giving control to citizens and creating self-reliance on the part of all who are touched by their local governments.
>
> While we know there is need to reform, we are less clear about how to achieve it. Most of our theories about making change are clustered around a belief in leadership. We think that leadership is the key to good governance. If our local government fails, throw the rascals out! It is this pervasive and almost religious belief in leaders that slows the process of genuine reform. Dependency is the antithesis of stewardship. To overcome this leadership tendency, the good governance principles of civic engagement, enabling, equity. and inclusion become all that more essential.[145]

The principles of good governance we have so faithfully woven into our discussions of your representation role, and the ten competencies we have suggested you master have in part created the leadership paradoxes mentioned earlier. Block's concept of stewardship is an alternative to leadership. While it may not be perfect, it helps to strip away some of the mythology that surrounds the principle of *leadership.* Robert Greenleaf in his book on *Servant Leadership* says, "The first order of business is to build a group of people who, under the influence of the institution, grow taller and become healthier, stronger, and more autonomous." Not a bad description of local government and the elected leadership role in relation to the community.

> *There is a strange charm in the thoughts of a good legacy.*
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> **Miguel de Cervantes, 16th Century Spanish writer**

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[145] Block, Peter, Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest, (San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler Publishing, 1993), pp.3-21. (Our apologies to Peter for altering his rhetoric, but not his wisdom, to fit the context of our discussion about local elected leadership.)

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Stewardship, good governance, and elected competencies

In the previous discussions of your representation role and the ten competencies associated with elected leadership, we have woven into the fabric of each the unifying strands of good governance. Assuming these principles of good governance are now firmly embedded in your conscience, we are going to refrain from repeating them in this discussion although they are the foundation stones of elected leadership. Rather, we want to relate a tale of good governance that embodies most, if not all, of these principles and competencies. While we could have chosen many examples from the best practice literature assembled by UN-HABITAT and other international organisations over the past few years, we think this tale of four Asian cities captures the essence and reality of good governance. As you read it, make some mental notes on how it reflects good governance principles and the ten elected leadership competencies we have included in this series.

SEALSWIP: The Southeast Asia local solid waste improvement project

SEALSWIP is a project funded in part by the Canadian International Development Agency and managed by the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC). While the initial thrust of this project came from outside the participating cities, it embodies enough good governance principles and local government competencies to warrant discussion in terms of elected leadership.

Six cities from Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines were selected in the late 1990s to be part of an integrated approach to sustainable development that would address a wide range of social, economic, and environmental issues while involving all sectors of these communities in a participatory process. By 2002, four cities had successfully implemented the programme. They were Udon Thani, Thailand; Rantepao and Makale, Indonesia; and Bacolod in the Philippines. The objectives of the project were very ambitious:

❑ To address garbage issues across the entire spectrum of the communities involved;
❑ To improve the quality of life and livelihoods of the scavengers and the children living on the dumpsites and those individuals who were buying and selling recyclables;
❑ To help the cities move from uncontrolled dumps to sanitary landfills;

- ❑ To establish solid waste management plans;
- ❑ To introduce recycling and composting programmes;
- ❑ To introduce a multi-stakeholder, decision-making process involving the private, public, and civil sectors; and
- ❑ To engage citizens and school children through public awareness campaigns.

As you can quickly see, these were complicated programmes. They not only cut across the range of institutions in their respective communities, they also were taking on a complex set of issues that most urban communities face and rarely resolve to their satisfaction. Let's look at how they did it.

Laying the foundation: ICSC initially signed letters of agreement with the cities and then established multi-stakeholder committees. This was followed by workshops where all the parties identified priority actions to be taken, the barriers and opportunities they could expect to encounter, and the resources needed for implementation. This open and participatory process included government officials, representatives from the private sector, local educational institutions and NGOs, waste pickers, project staff, and technical experts. Attention was paid to ensure that women were represented on various committees and their involvement would be possible throughout the programmes in each of the urban areas.

All projects started with a public participatory process where the solid waste management priorities and objectives were established and various multi-stakeholder committees formed to deal with priority issues. These committees formed task forces that established their own work plans and budgets that would in turn set in motion the allocation of financial, technical, and human resources. Based on these arrangements, the local governments and ICSC signed memoranda of agreement documenting the partnerships, responsibilities. and funding. In addition, the various stakeholder committees worked with national government, private sector and NGO representatives to identify cash and in-kind resources needed to carry out the projects.

The process of decision making and problem solving: As the projects got underway, it was apparent that governance and sustainability issues were as important as solid waste management concerns. Many of the major challenges involved issues of transparency in making decisions and assuring that committee initiatives were not diverted for personal gain. By assuring a balanced approach among the stakeholders in evaluating proposals, several proposals were investigated and dropped even though they had the support of high level officials. Prior to adopting this participatory approach to decision making, there had been issues of accountability in budgeting decisions reached by some of the participating local governments. The multi-stakeholder model helped confront corruption and other issues of governance.

In order to build sustainability into the programmes beyond the life of external support, ICSC and its partners worked to introduce, improve, and

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implement various solid waste management policies and regulations. These changes in policies and regulations were made as it became evident they were needed, demonstrating the importance of responding to needs as they arise rather than dealing with them in some abstract manner. In all the cities, benchmarks such as daily waste collection in tonnage per day, costs per tonne collected, and amounts of waste being recycled and composted were established to assess performance and to make comparisons among the cities. The lessons that were learned in each of the projects were disseminated widely among all the cities involved in the project as well as those beyond the project.

Results-oriented achievements: These programmes achieved an amazing array of tangible and important results including the following:

- ❑ Increased managerial and technical capacity of local government officials;
- ❑ Reductions in landfill waste through composting, recycling, and waste reduction projects;
- ❑ Improved health and safety for workers and waste pickers through vaccinations and hazardous waste training;
- ❑ Increased incomes and literacy for waste pickers and their children;
- ❑ Construction of financially and environmentally sustainable solid waste infrastructures;
- ❑ Capacity to design and implement public policies and regulations through participatory decision making processes; and
- ❑ A multi-stakeholder process involving private, public, and civil society sectors that proved to be viable and transferable to other urban issues.

In these cities, garbage is no longer perceived as the mayor's problem but as everybody's responsibility.

While the results just listed were common to all the cities, each programme unearthed unique challenges. To illustrate these challenges, we are focusing only on the successes achieved in Bacolod, Philippines. A basic literacy programme was introduced in Bacolod when the organisers realized the waste pickers and their children were illiterate. When the waste pickers rejected sending their children off-site for schooling because of the cost of fees and uniforms and the possibility that they would be discriminated against by other children, a one-room school was established near the landfill. Training programmes were organised to help the waste pickers overcome their literacy deficiencies and learn new trades. A cooperative of junk scavengers was formed and a micro-lending scheme established to help them build their businesses. At the policy level, a workshop was held where participants developed a solid waste management plan for the city. Women were full participants in these programmes.

By involving citizens and local companies in the initial planning of these programmes, new and creative solutions were developed that might not

have been possible if the local governments had been working independently. The focus on involving women and children in these programmes helped to bring them on board as active partners in various spin-offs resulting from the programme. The local governments learned it is more effective to address policy and governance issues when the focus is on specific problems that to address them from the top down. On-the-ground experiences helped government decision makers realise what was possible and practical in terms of policies and programmes.

Those who initiated the programmes soon learned the importance of listening to participants and responding to their needs as they saw them. It demonstrated the importance of starting from where the major stakeholders were at the time and not from where the local governments thought they should be. This openness and transparency helped to build trust among the many participating stakeholders. One of the most important lessons learned from these programmes was the need for reciprocity. As the organisers caution, "Don't give anything away for free, even to the poorest of the poor. Contributing sweat equity allows everyone to maintain their dignity and respect. Confront dependence and dishonesty and use these experiences to engage in collaborative problem solving."[146]

These programmes demonstrated many of the principles of good governance as well as the ten elected leadership competencies we have been discussing throughout this series. Before we move on we suggest you take a reflective break and list the good governance principles that were involved and the competencies that were used to make these programmes in South-eastern Asia so successful. A summary of both the good governance principles and elected competencies can be found in Chapter One, *Introduction to the Series.*

A reflective opportunity

We want to give you an opportunity to cross reference the case study with the good governance principles and the elected leadership competencies we have been discussing throughout the series. For each of the following good governance principles, jot down examples from the case study where you believe each principle played an important part. If you're not clear about the meaning of some of the terms, check them out in Chapter I, Introduction to the Series.

Now, think about the ten competencies we've covered in this elected leadership series and record whether or not you believe each was used by any of the stakeholders in the case situation and if so, how.

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[146] The information about the SEALSWIP project was taken from the International Centre for Sustainable Cities website: www.icsc.ca/sealswip

GG Principles	Examples of how each principle was involved
Sustainability	
Subsidiarity of authority	
Equity and inclusiveness	
Accountability	
Participation	
Efficiency and effectiveness	

Now, think about the ten competencies we've covered in this elected leadership series and record whether or not you believe each was used by any of the stakeholders in the case situation and if so, how.

Competency	Yes/No	How?
Communicating		
Facilitating		
Using power		
Decision making		
Policy making		
Enabling		
Negotiating		
Financing		
Overseeing		
Institution building		

What is the most important lesson learned from this case study that could help your own governing body and local government be more effective in addressing complex problems like those described in the case study?

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The obvious is that which is never seen until someone else expresses it simply.

Kahlil Gibran Early 20th Century, Lebanese poet

A journey into the leadership literature

As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, this edition of the Elected Leadership Series is the result of an e-mail survey of past users of the old series and a week-long meeting of user experts in Nairobi, Kenya. We have tried to incorporate as many of the recommendations provided by these users knowing that the series would be much improved by their contributions. When this last chapter in the series was discussed, there were many ideas put forth about ways to strengthen it. Among the most important, from the expert user group's perspective, was the need to address the good governance principles, to focus on ethics and integrity as leadership responsibilities, and to explore other qualities that were overlooked in the first edition, such as vision, trust, and fairness.

We believe the first two concerns have been addressed in previous chapters in this series. What is left to cover in this final chapter is an idea that floated around the table in Kenya but never was nailed down as a specific recommendation in the report. And, that idea has to do with sharing some new or less well-known ideas about this thing called *leadership.* The intent of these new and off-beat thoughts on leadership is three-fold. First, we hope they will provide insight into and support for many of the principles associated with *good governance.* Second, the concern for covering other governance principles such as vision and trust is prominent in some of the newer writings about leadership. Finally, we want to "rattle your brains" with some ideas that might seem farfetched now but could become mainstream before your elected-leadership career ends. We start this journey into some lesser known concepts of leadership by looking at the role of followership.

Leadership and followership

There is an old adage that leaders are only as effective as those who follow them. Leadership requires followership. It's all very logical, or is it? James MacGregor Burns, who has spent a professional lifetime studying leadership, stresses the importance of the transactional relationship between leaders and followers. He defines leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations - the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations - of both leaders and followers.[147]

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[147] Burns, James MacGregor, Leadership (New York, Harper and Row, 1978), p.19.

The genius of leadership, according to Burns, lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations. This is not a new idea. Lao-Tzu, the sixth century B.C. Chinese philosopher, said, *To lead the people, walk behind them.* However, David Nicoll wants to turn this leadership-followership idea on its head. He says *there are no followers.* He argues that most theories of leadership, including the one by Burns that we just quoted, are based on Newtonian mechanics and linear, hierarchic, and dualistic thinking.

Leaders can no longer presume simply that they are the people who step out first, who take initiative and the first risk, who come up with the new idea. They can no longer believe, unquestioningly, that they are the ones who express the new vision, who arouse the new awareness, who evoke the new excitement. Nor can they assume automatically that they are the ones who engage the new commitment, who build the new invention, who point us in the new direction.[148]

Assuming there are no followers, of course, creates a real dilemma for leaders. According to Nicoll, leaders will need to accept and believe that followers use leaders to make the path. Leaders must come to believe that followers are not passive, reactive tools of the system but rather the creators of energy. In the case of local government, local citizens are the agents who show their leaders where to walk...who validate their leaders stepping out in a direction that has meaning for all of us.

Nicoll readily admitted at the time he wrote his article that none of us really believe this.

We are too tied up in the passive-follower concept to accept the idea of active, meaningful roles for everyone...Only when we change the focus of our thoughts from solitary acts of leadership to mutual action-dialogues, and the foundation of our beliefs from followers to shapers will we let ourselves come to terms with such issues as fear and surrender. [149]

These rather obtuse and somewhat jarring thoughts about leadership, which were made in the mid-1980s, have gained more validity and understanding in the interim. Many rapid advances in computer and biological sciences have not been driven from the top but rather from the bottom, from not followers in the traditional sense but rather from those who belong to the *there-are-no-followers* school of thinking. Bill Gates and others have been, in Nicoll's words, *the agents who showed their leaders where to walk...who validated their leaders to step out in a direction that has meaning to all of us.*

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[148] Nicoll, David, "Leadership and Followership," in John Adams (ed), Transforming Leadership: From Vision to Results, (Alexandria, VA, Miles River Press, 1986), pp.29-38.
[149] Nicoll, p.38.

The same could be true of the gender pioneers. Mary Robinson, Ireland's Prime Minister in the mid-1990s, said:

> A woman leader often has a distinctive approach as the country's chief story teller, personifying a sense of nationhood and telling a story that also helps to shape people's sense of their own identity. This is leadership by influencing and inspiring rather than by commanding.[150]

Professor Nancy Adler with McGill University in Quebec, Canada, has been researching the influences of women on global leadership. She says more than half of all women who have ever served as national political leaders have come into office since 1990. At this rate of increase, it is expected that almost twice as many women will become national heads of state in the first decade of the twenty-first century than have ever served before.[151]

Of course, you are saying to yourself as you read this, "So what does this have to do with Nicoll's notion that 'there are no followers?'" Well, nothing until you re-read his rationale.

> Leaders will need to accept and believe that followers use leaders to make the path. Leaders must allow themselves to believe that followers are not passive, reactive tools of the system but rather the creators of energy. They are the agents who show their leaders where to walk...who validate their leaders stepping out in a direction that has meaning for all of us.

A reflective opportunity

Think about what Nicoll is saying in relationship to the good governance principles of civic engagement, inclusion, and equity, and the enabling competency. Jot down your thoughts on how these principles, when put into practice, are changing the traditional notion that leaders need followers.

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To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.

Anatole France, 20th C. French novelist and satirist

150 Pond, Elizabeth, Women in Leadership: a letter from Stockholm, The Washington Quarterly, 1996: # 4: p.59.
151 Adler, Nancy, Global Leadership: Women Leaders in Management International Review, Volume 37, (no.1), 1997, pp.171-196.

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Spiritual leadership

The next rather off-beat leadership idea we encountered was this one. No, spiritual leadership, as the author defines it, is not about religious leadership. It is about the leadership of spirit. James Ritscher takes us down a very different path in terms of leadership. It's one we think is germane to elected leadership. Moreover, it includes a number of the principles the expert group suggested we add to the good governance principles that are currently shaping the local government agenda worldwide. Let's see what he has to say about *spiritual* leadership.

Ritscher says all organisations and communities have *spirit*. It has to do with their very nature-their vitality, energy, purpose, and vision. Spiritual leadership involves an unusual set of skills or competencies.[152] Since most are quite different from the ten we have outlined in this series of leadership chapters, we thought they would be of interest to you and your elected colleagues. While the author proposes ten leadership skills or principles, we will focus only on those we believe are germane to your local elected leadership roles and responsibilities.

- ❑ **Inspired vision:** Inspired visions transcend present reality. They create a mental image of a community that aspires to greatness. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech broke the backbone of racial discrimination in the United States. Granted, the inspired vision didn't provide civil rights immediately, but it paved the way for major social and legislative changes. Likewise, Mohandas Gandhi brought one of the world's greatest empires to its knees because he had an inspired vision of a new India. He had no formal power, wore no uniform, and held no public office. As Keshavan Nair tells us in *A Higher Standard of Leadership,* Gandhi reminded the world that the **human spirit is indomitable and that courage and love are more powerful than force.** His life was not governed by policies but rather by principles and values.[153] Incidentally, the Hindi word for leader is netratwa. And netra means "eye."

- ❑ **Clarity of mind:** The elected official's life is hectic, disruptive, and prone to petty and dramatic crises. It tends to clutter the mind with trivia and immediacy. It is a work and lifestyle that defies clarity of mind which is important if you are going to have "inspired visions." Both imply focus, being clear about priorities, and being able to think rationally and clearly without closing the door to your intuition and creativity. Ritscher uses a poem by the Sufi poet Rumi to help explain.

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[152] Ritscher, James A. " Spiritual Leadership" in John Adams (ed), Transforming Leadership: From Vision to Results, (Alexandria, VA, Miles River Press, 1986), pp. 61-80.

[153] Nair, Keshavan, A Higher Standard of Leadership: Lessons from the Life of Gandhi, San Francisco, Berrett Koehler Publishers, 1994), p.3.

The moment I'm disappointed, I feel encouraged.
When I'm ruined, I'm healed.
When I'm quiet and solid as the ground, then I
talk the low tones of thunder for everyone.

As Ritscher explains, "the first two lines exhibit a kind of detachment from life. They are similar to the idea 'work hard to achieve the result you want, but don't waste time with disappointment if you fail.' The last two lines express the essence of leadership. Great leadership falls on the shoulders of men and women who have great solidity and clarity."[154]

❑ **Will, toughness, and intention:** We discussed the need for willingness in the Institution Building chapter as the companion to ability. Without the will to act, the ability to act as a leader becomes meaningless. By toughness, the author is not referring to macho behaviour but rather *maintaining sensitivity while strengthening the ability to accept and deal with situations as they are.* When citizens are yelling at you during a governing body meeting, toughness is the ability and willingness to listen carefully without getting upset. *Intention* can be linked to the first skill of *inspired vision.* While it may be your intention to follow through on your inspired vision, it's your willingness and toughness that makes your intention a reality. Willingness gives your intentions life; toughness helps you sustain them.

❑ **Low ego, high results:** Ego is the overemphasis on self. While many individuals in positions of power have large egos, it is not a sign of personal strength. Ego is me versus you. The antithesis of ego is caring, service, cooperation, and dedication to results. Low ego is directly associated with your enabling competencies and enabling actions as a governing body. Ritscher uses the term *transformational leadership* to demonstrate the importance of low ego-high results. This combination of personal qualities encourages individuals to give up petty, egotistical needs to work for the common good and vision. It encourages the enabling of communities and organisations to transform themselves based on shared visions of what is possible.

❑ **Trust and openness:** Trust is having faith in yourself and others. Trust is believing that others will think and act appropriately. By openness Ritscher means being unguarded, candid, and truthful. In this context it is somewhat different from the "openness" principle in the good governance portfolio of values. Here it is more personal and tied closely to trust. He states that these two skills or personal qualities can be seen as transforming into somewhat irrational behaviours. Elected

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[154] |Ritscher, pp.64-5

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men and women are often perceived as not being trustworthy, and they reciprocate by not "trusting" citizens. These reciprocal perceptions often close the door to openness.

Trust and openness is therefore one of those paradoxical pairs of behaviour that takes time and energy to instil into the political process and community. Nevertheless, these are two principles that make it possible to have meaningful and productive democratic dialogues. As the author reminds us, *a predisposition to trust creates a powerful energy field around a leader. People are drawn to this energy because they experience themselves as bigger people in the leader's presence. The leader's trust bolsters their confidence, creating a sense of stability and safely.* Inspired visions will fall on barren ground if they are not backed by mutual trust and openness.

❑ **Integrity:** Integrity is tied closely to trust. We rarely trust an individual who lacks integrity. But what exactly is integrity? It has at times been described as "what you see is what your get." In other words, there is complete congruency between what you say and what you do. For elected officials, integrity is sometimes problematic if they as individuals are tied to a political party or group that has a tendency to want to "spin the rhetoric" to gain advantage over its competition. This puts you in a position of asking yourself, "Which is more important to me: my relationship with myself or my political colleagues?" The person who chooses the former often gets both while the person who chooses the later gets neither. However, the choices don't always look this clear at the time.

❑ **A context of personal growth and fulfilment:** Spiritual leadership is not just taking care of your own personal growth and fulfilment but the growth and fulfilment of your local government's employees and your citizens. It's a very tall order, but anything less diminishes the potential of the local government organisation and the community. Ritscher points out the personal needs of each of us as individuals. They include a source of livelihood; a sense of personal effectiveness; personal direction; the experience of fulfilment; the experience of community and cooperation; happiness; emotional support; personal growth; and success. Perhaps not so surprising is the congruence between these personal needs and the needs of organisations and communities. Spiritual leadership is not just tending to one's own personal needs for growth and fulfilment but also those of the local government and the community.

The winds of grace blow all the time.
All we need to do is set our sails.

Ramakrishna, 19th Century Hindu religious leader

A reflective opportunity

Before we move on, reflect on what James Ritscher calls spiritual leadership and the individual qualities as they relate to your roles and responsibilities as an elected official. Which ones are most important? Which ones would be the most difficult to achieve?

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      Take the most important and jot down some actions that you and your governing body might take to fulfil it.

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Leadership is not a position. It's a job.

Max De Pree, 20th C. American Management Specialist

Leadership and the performing arts

Max De Pree wrote a book called *Leadership Jazz* many years ago. As we poured over hundreds of publications in our efforts to define the crux of leadership, we kept coming back to some of the things he had to say about leadership. What impressed us from the standpoint of this set of elected leadership chapters was his use of some of the principles of good governance. And De Pree was pitching his thoughts about leadership to his fellow corporate executives. In closing this discussion of your leadership role and responsibilities as a local elected official, we want to share some of his thoughts about leadership.

De Pree associates leadership with a jazz band, thus his metaphor.

> Jazz band leaders must choose the music, find the right musicians, and perform in public. (Just like elected officials!) But the effect of the performance depends on so many things: the environment; volunteers playing in the band; the need for everyone to perform as individuals and as a group; the absolute dependence of the leader on the members of the band; and the need of the leader for the followers to play well. What a summary of an organisation.[155] (And we would add—a community of citizens that can make beautiful music together.)

He says that leadership is hard, exciting, good work. It's also, he reminds us, a serious meddling in other people's lives. What you do as an elected official does meddle in the lives of local people in your communities. Hopefully, most of it is good meddling, but at times, it's seen as not so good meddling as well. Democracy is not anarchy where everyone can do as they please often at the expense of others. Democratic self-governance must weigh the consequences of public actions. Most often the decisions and actions you take as an elected official benefit the many. But, other times they justifiably benefit the few. Public leadership is hard work, but good work.

According to De Pree, a jazz band is an expression of servant leadership. The leader has the opportunity to bring out the best in his musicians, but it is the musicians that contribute to his success as their leader. Jazz, like leadership, or leadership like jazz, "combines the unpredictability of the future with the gifts of individuals." De Pree believes we have the right as citizens to ask our leaders to not only be successful but *faithful.* Now, that's a word we have not seen or heard before in the discussions of leadership and one reason we were drawn to his thoughts about leadership, in addition to his love for jazz, that is. By his own admission, measuring success of our leaders is mysterious enough, and judging faithfulness, well, that's another matter.

Nevertheless, De Pree provides us with five criteria to start thinking about the *faithfulness* of our servant leaders.

1. *Integrity in all things.* This precedes all else. The open and transparent demonstration of integrity is essential to leadership. For public leaders, like locally elected men and women, perceptions are a fact of life. To perceive our leaders as being unfaithful makes them unfaithful.

2. *The servant hood of leadership.* This reverse role of follower needs to be felt, understood, believed, and practiced faithfully for leaders to be faithful. According to De Pree, the best description of servant leadership can be found in the book of Luke. "The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules, like the one who serves."

3. *Accountability for others.* Note that this is different from the good governance principle of being accountable to others. Nevertheless, it hits at the heart of programmes to alleviate poverty and to include the afflicted within the grasp of public leadership. *Leaders should encourage and sustain those on the bottom rung first and then turn to those on the top.*

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[155] De Pree, Max, Leadership Jazz, (New York, Doubleday Publishing, 1992), p. 3.

4. *The practice of equity.* While equity should certainly guide the apportioning of resources, it is far more important in our human relationships.

5. *Leaders must be vulnerable.* As a leader you need to offer others the opportunity to do their best. In these enabling initiatives, you necessarily become vulnerable. Leaders become vulnerable by sharing with others the marvellous gift of being personally accountable.[156]

"Leadership begins not with techniques but with premises, not with tools but with beliefs, and not with systems but with understanding...It's often difficult, painful and sometimes even unrewarding, and it's work. There are also times of joy in the work of leadership, and doing the work of a leader is necessary in our society." As Karl Wallenda, the late, great circus performer said, "*Being on the tightrope is living; everything else is waiting.*

A reflective opportunity

We have come a long way together in our pursuit of local elected leadership. In this last discussion we have deliberately tossed your way a number of "off-the-beaten-path" looks at your role of leadership from followership to spirituality to jazz. It's been quite a journey. Before saying goodbye, we think another opportunity to reflect about leadership is not only appropriate but deserved.

In the space below, and hopefully more, find a quiet spot and say in your own words what *leadership* means to you. Put it in words that mean the most to you. Max De Pree talked about it in terms of something he loves and admires-jazz. Pick your own metaphor for leadership and let your thoughts flow.

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Seek the ways of the eagle, not the wren.

Omaha proverb

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[156] De Pree, pp. 17-9.

Leadership

Key points

❑ Leadership is the antithesis of Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody.

❑ Leadership as an art form in paradox.

❑ Elected leadership is managing the paradoxes within the principles of good governance.

❑ If you yearn to leave a leadership legacy for your service to local government and the community, think *stewardship*.

❑ Stewardship is the fulcrum by which you can leverage a more inclusive governance.

❑ Elected leadership is the ability to infuse complex community problems with governing principles, practical competencies, and measurable and sustainable results. See SEALSWIP case for verification of this truism.

❑ Leadership is about followership in theory and recognising that there are no followers in practice. See bullets one, two, and three for verification.

❑ Followers show their leaders where to walk. Validation of this weird notion is found through authentic civic engagement in every neighbourhood you govern.

❑ Spiritual leadership is not about religion; it's about community spirit and how to harness its vitality and energy to create inspired visions of not what is but what can and will be.

❑ Add inspired visions, clarity of purpose, integrity, will, and trust to your collection of good governance principles. Without these essential ingredients, there can be no good governance and no elected stewardship.

❑ *Being on the tightrope is living; everything else is waiting.* Being on the elected leadership tightrope is not a position, it's a job. Nevertheless, it is a job worth doing in the best tradition of principled stewardship.

Never, for the sake of peace and quiet, deny your own experience or conviction.

Dag Hammarskjold, 20th C. Swedish UN Secretary General (1953-61)