

BRIDGING DIVIDES

Tackling Polarization in Your Cities & Communities

Thursday, September 23, 2021

WELCOME



Erica L. Manuel

*CEO & Executive Director
Institute for Local Government
Moderator*

About this Session

After a polarizing 2020, how can city leaders help bridge divides in their communities and begin to advance policies and programs that heal and unify their residents?

In this panel, you'll hear from a nationally recognized expert in civil discourse and bi-partisanship, and two local government leaders about how to approach complex topics, find common ground and rebuild trust.

PANELISTS



Lucas Frerichs
*Vice Mayor
City of Davis*



Quirina Orozco
*City Councilmember
City of West Sacramento*



John Wood Jr.
*National Leader
Braver Angels*

NON-PROFIT, NON-PARTISAN & COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- The Institute for Local Government is the non-profit training and education affiliate of three statewide local government associations
- Together with our affiliates, we serve over 2,500 local agencies – cities, counties and special districts
- We provide practical and easy-to-use resources so local agencies can effectively implement policies on the ground



**California Special
Districts Association**
Districts Stronger Together

ILG'S PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Program Areas

Leadership & Governance

Civics Education & Workforce

Public Engagement

Sustainable & Resilient Communities



Services

Education & Training

Technical Assistance

Capacity Building

Convening

Our mission is to help local government leaders **navigate complexity, increase capacity & build trust** in their communities.

A WIDESPREAD NETWORK OF LOCAL GOV'T LEADERS



58
Counties

482
Cities

2,500+
Special
Districts

20,000+
Local
Agency
Leaders

WHY LOCAL LEADERSHIP MATTERS

California's local government leaders face a myriad of complex and evolving leadership challenges.

- Elected leaders and staff cannot effectively address these challenges without a strong foundation of good government - trust, accountability, responsiveness, equity and transparency.
- ILG's Leadership and Governance pillar helps local government leaders build that foundation, develop leadership skills and increase public trust.



<https://www.ca-ilg.org>

WHAT WE'RE HEARING IN THE FIELD

Increased partisanship and polarization – at all levels of government

Single issue/advocate candidates

COVID makes it difficult to build trust & relationships with newly-elected Councilmembers

Increase in negative public comments at Council meetings

Perpetual crisis management

Intergovernmental relations can be a challenge

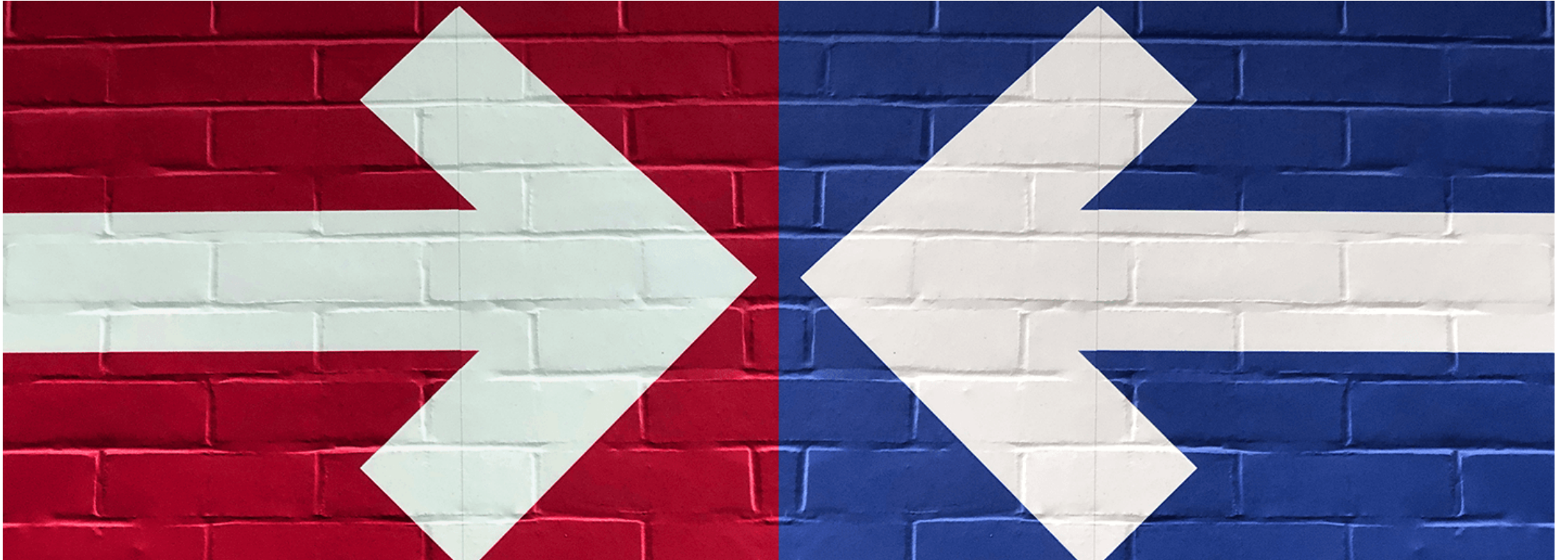
Instability of funding/financial conditions

Difficulty communicating effectively with constituents/customer base

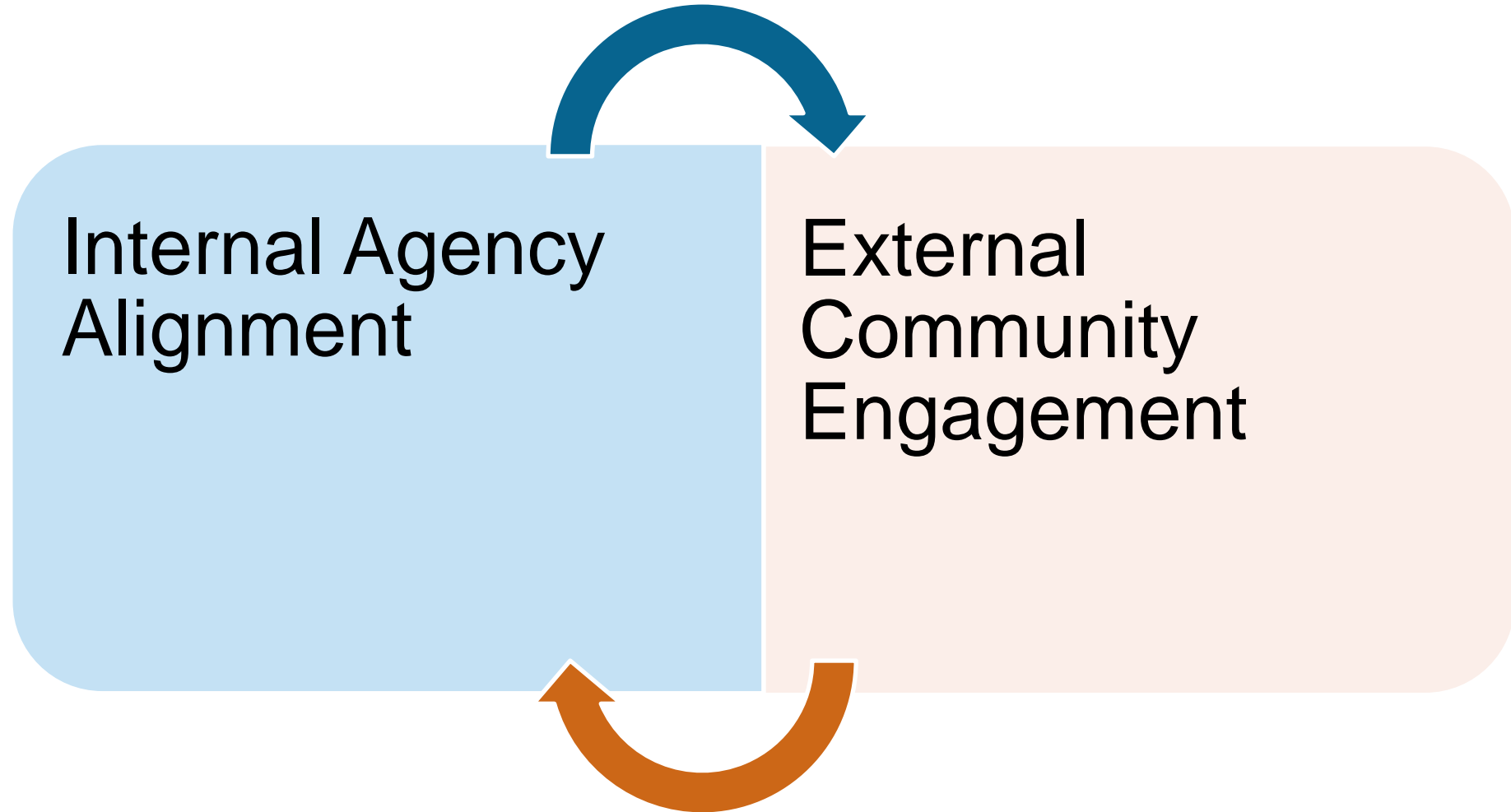
Staff retention and recruitment is harder than ever

Social media complicates communication

NATIONAL ISSUES AFFECT LOCAL COMMUNITIES



INTERNAL DYNAMICS CAN IMPACT EXTERNAL RESULTS



TACKLING POLARIZATION IN THE CITY OF DAVIS



CRISIS CAN BRING US TOGETHER



ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE COUNCILS

Develop a sense of team

Have clear roles and responsibilities

Honor the relationship with staff and each other

Conduct effective meetings

Hold themselves and the city accountable

Practice continuous learning and development

GOVERNANCE TOOLS CAN HELP



- Team Building
- Priority & Goal Setting
- Governance Handbook
- Self-Evaluations
- Study Sessions
- Continuing Education & Professional Development

USING THE RIGHT APPROACH

Focus on Good
Governance

Acknowledge and
Honor Humanity &
Lived Experiences

Model Civility

Prioritize Equity

Lead by Example

Seek Impartial
Leadership &
Governance Support

CELEBRATING SHARED VALUES



FINDING COMMON GROUND IN THE CITY OF WEST SACRAMENTO



SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE



COMMUNITY EVENTS BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER



CONNECTING WITH KIDS & FAMILIES



AUTHENTICITY COUNTS





CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS STILL NEED TO HAPPEN



3 DIMENSIONS OF ARGUING BETTER



**Historical
Context**



**Emotional
Intelligence**



**Recognizing
Power**

Source: Better Arguments

5 PRINCIPLES OF ARGUING BETTER

Take
Winning off
the Table

Prioritize
Relationships
and Listen
Passionately

Pay
Attention to
Context

Embrace
Vulnerability

Make Room
to Transform

Source: Better Arguments

WORDS TO REMEMBER

It's you and me
vs. the problem

Not you vs. me

TOOLKITS, WEBSITES & WRITTEN RESOURCES

From ILG

- Ethics resources: www.ca-ilg.org/ethics
- Leadership resources: www.ca-ilg.org/leadership
- [Western City article: Establishing a Code of Conduct for your Council](#)

From Other Sources

- [Better Arguments](#)
- [Ohio State University: Divided Community Project](#)
- [Living Room Conversations](#)
- [USA Today: “Hidden Common Ground” Series](#)
- [Arizona Public Media \(National Institute for Civil Discourse\): The Role of Civility in Bridging Racial Divides](#)

DISCUSSION AND Q&A



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CONTACT THE PANELISTS



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**THANK YOU FOR
JOINING US!**

ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE COUNCILS

DEVELOP A SENSE OF TEAM

Key Characteristics

- Successfully transition from candidate to a member of the council.
- Become a champion for the city. Make decisions based on the needs and interests of the community at-large / the greater good.
- Develop, communicate and support policy goals and council decisions.
- Demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively (as a team) and have a city-wide perspective.

HAVE CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Key Characteristics

- Understand the role of local government and their responsibilities.
- Know their role: to set vision and policy, avoid micromanagement.
- Council members should strive to be informed about the issues facing the city and be prepared to ask questions of staff and each other.

HONOR THE RELATIONSHIP WITH STAFF AND EACH OTHER

Key Characteristics

- Council members have the ability to respectfully disagree (to disagree without being disagreeable).
- They are able to leave it at the dais; debates are about policy, not personality.
- Exceptional board members reflect positive decorum/model leadership by providing respectful tone with colleagues.
- Effective boards establish a set of behaviors ahead of time, potentially documented in a code of conduct, to help promote civility and respect.

CONDUCT EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Key Characteristics

- Council members are respectful of each other, the public and everyone's time.
- Council members use engaging body language as a way to demonstrate respect.
- Issues are not personalized and thoughtful dialogue is the objective.
- Agenda packets are read, Council members come prepared and have an open mind.
- Respect is demonstrated for varied opinions.
- Everyone strives to be civil and act with decorum.

HOLD THEMSELVES AND THE CITY ACCOUNTABLE

Key Characteristics

- Council members operate ethically and with integrity.
- Councils conduct team building / goal setting exercise to track progress towards mutually agreed upon goals.
- Councils taking responsibility for the results (good and bad).
- Councils celebrate success.
- Council members hold themselves responsible for adhering to operating protocols and codes of conduct.
- Everyone strives to be civil and act with decorum.

PRACTICE CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Key Characteristics

- Stay informed on key issues, even those that are uncomfortable to discuss, like race, equity and engagement.
- Gain key insights and knowledge on all aspects of governing, from budgets to plans and everything in between.
- Learn to listen. Listening is sometimes more important than learning to give a speech.
- Gather insights from people with lived experience, as well as other subject matter experts.

GOVERNANCE TOOLS

GOAL SETTING & STRATEGIC PLANNING

Encourage Council to work with the City Manager to establish goals for the year

- City staff should support them
- Quarterly updates
- Budget priorities follow goals
- Link between CM performance goals and strategic planning goals
- Use a third party for goal setting and performance evaluation



ESTABLISH CLEAR MEASURES FOR SUCCESS

- **Specific**
- **Measureable**
- **Achievable**
- **Realistic**
- **Timely**

Encourage regular review of policy effectiveness and implementation practices.



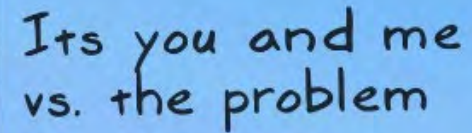
PERIODIC REVIEWS OF NORMS

Confirm or modify Board norms

- Review the agreements made previously and check in on how they are working
- Determine tune-ups needed
- Consensus on agreements

Consider:

- What norms are important for the Board-to-Board working relationship to be most effective?
- What will make the Board - Manager relationship most effective?

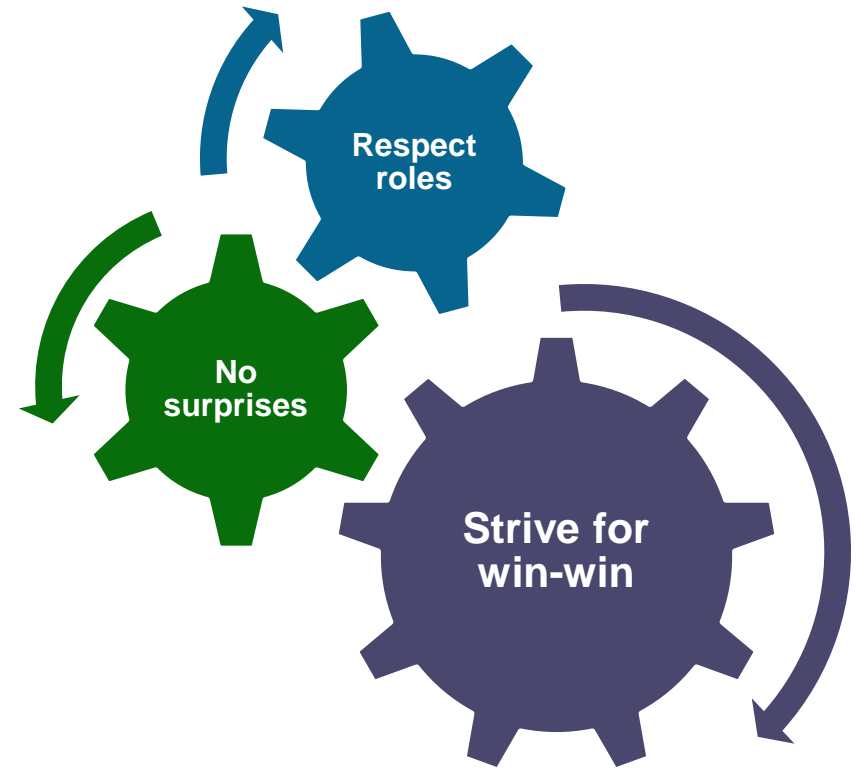


Its you and me
vs. the problem

Not you vs. me

SAMPLE NORMS

- Work together, modeling teamwork and civility for our community
- Demonstrate honesty & integrity in every action
- Share information & avoid surprises
- Disagree agreeably & professionally
- Work for the common good, not personal interest
- Strive for win-win – work toward for consensus and seek common ground
- Honor “discussion” before “decisions” – reserve formal motions until initial discussions have taken place



SAMPLE GOVERNANCE HANDBOOKS & CODES OF CONDUCT

Form of Government

Board Powers and Responsibilities

Board Norms & Ground Rules

Legal Standards & Conflicts of Interest

Communications
Media & Community
Engagement

Meeting Protocols

Financial Matters

Advisory Bodies

SELF-EVALUATIONS → CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Board Governance Survey
Governance Principles and County Values

The Board has established 7 governance principles that guide their behavior. (More information can be found on pages 9 and 10 of the Board Governance Manual.) A workgroup of County employee's created a values statement that was adopted by the Board in 2012. Please provide feedback on these two items below. (More information can be found on page 8 of the Board Governance Manual.)

Please indicate your perception of the Board's attainment of the following principles:

| | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Disagree | Unable to comment |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The Board governs as a team, strategically focused and mission driven. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The Board aligns goals and resources. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The Board establishes and governs within a culture of inquiry. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The Board governs in an accessible manner, committed to openness and transparency. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| 1 | UNSATISFACTORY | Inconsistent and/or low quality practice of the majority of the Board or the Board as a whole |
| 2 | COULD BE IMPROVED | Practice somewhat exhibited by some members of the Board or the Board as a whole |
| 3 | SATISFACTORY | Practice often exhibited by some members of the Board or the Board as a whole |
| 4 | EXCELLENT | Consistent and high quality practice of the Board as a whole |

Section I: The Board

| # | The Board | (1) Unsatisfactory — (4) Excellent | | | |
|----|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. | The Board is committed to a common vision. | | | | |
| 2. | Governs as a team, strategically focused and mission driven. | | | | |
| 3. | Governs in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect. | | | | |
| 4. | Governs in an accessible manner, committed to openness and transparency. | | | | |
| 5. | Governs within a culture of inquiry. | | | | |
| 6. | Governs in a collaborative manner with the community, staff and within the Board. | | | | |

STUDY SESSIONS ARE ONE SOLUTION TO CONSIDER

- An opportunity to bring **special or difficult topics** to the Council for open discussion in a public setting
- Allow policy-makers to reflect on issues and raise concerns **before** an item is fully developed into a policy or plan
- Are purposeful, do not require a vote, and are an opportunity to learn and **share insight & perspectives** on challenges or issues



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Fire Chiefs Leadership Seminar



Municipal Finance Institute



New Mayors and Council Members Academy



Planning Commissioners Academy



Public Works Officers Institute

www.CalCities.org



WHAT IS “AUTHENTIC” PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

Inclusive

Accessible

Dialogue-
Focused

Culturally
Competent

With authentic engagement, leaders know where the public stands as problem solving progresses, and residents themselves can contribute to solutions through their input, ideas and actions.

AUTHENTIC PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MAY HELP BRIDGE DIVIDES

Better identification of the public's values, ideas and recommendations

More informed residents - about issues and about local agencies

Improved local agency decision-making and actions, with better impacts and outcomes

More community buy-in and support, with less contentiousness

Faster project implementation with less need to revisit

More trust in each other and in local government

HONE YOUR ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Good tips for listening to public comments when you cannot respond.

Listen for **substance** behind emotion.

Suspend your **assumptions**. Be aware of personal biases and preconceived notions.

Practice **curiosity**.

Put into **historical perspective** of racial, economic and social injustices.

Pay attention to **nonverbal** communication.

Reframe. Complaints can also reveal what otherwise remain hidden.

KEEPING YOUR MEETINGS & PROJECTS ON TRACK

Dealing with Challenging Participants

THINK AHEAD: utilize a meeting design that allows for real engagement but limits “grandstanding”.

Practice active listening, be respectful.

Identify and respond to the substance of the question.

Acknowledge and validate opinions and viewpoints.

Pause the meeting/take a break and chat with the participant one-on-one.

Acknowledge underlying history and assumptions.

Make sure to allow time for online input.

Use a neutral facilitator if possible.

KEEPING YOUR MEETINGS & PROJECTS ON TRACK

Plan, Prepare and Provide Information

Be clear about the process, purpose and how final decisions will be made.

Meet with groups/orgs that are likely to have strongly held beliefs early in the process.

Provide appropriate background information.

Present a broad spectrum of views (presenters).

Be ready for the comments and don't take it personally.

Invite a co-host from the community to share in meeting facilitation duties.

ILG'S PE TRAINING IS NOW VIRTUAL!

NEW TRAINING!

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TRAINING for LOCAL GOV'T

POPULAR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP NOW VIRTUAL & UPDATED FOR A POST-COVID WORLD!

THURS, NOVEMBER 18 & FRI, NOVEMBER 19, 2021 via ZOOM

SPACE IS LIMITED. REGISTER TODAY!

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NEXT TRAINING on 11/18

- Updated to include post-COVID resources
- New emphasis on virtual engagement strategies and equity considerations
- Customized for individual contributors in local government

NEW LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

NEW TRAINING FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

LEVEL UP YOUR LEADERSHIP!

Master Your Role as an
Effective Elected or Appointed Official & Community Leader

MONDAY, DECEMBER 6 and MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2021
5:00 PM - 7:30 PM
via Zoom

TRAINING HOSTED BY:



LEARN MORE & REGISTER:

WWW.CA-ILG.ORG

JOIN US on 12/6 & 12/13

- Learn strategies to promote civility and respond to diverse viewpoints
- Understand various roles and responsibilities of the governing body, your agency's administrator and staff
- Explore community engagement strategies and collaborative decision-making processes
- Share real-world experiences with other elected officials