

LIFE, WELL RUN

KEY FACTS ABOUT PROFESSIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS

The Basics

What is a professional local government manager?

A professional local government manager is an appointed administrator hired to serve the mayor, city council, and community. A professional manager is like the chief executive officer of a corporation.

Do all city, town, and county governments have managers with professional training in public administration?

No. Elected officials manage some local governments.

How many cities, towns, and counties are served by professional local government managers?

Professional managers oversee the day-to-day operations of more than 59 percent of cities and towns with a population of 2,500 and over, and 27 percent of counties across America.

What are professional local government managers called?

You can recognize them by many titles: city manager, town administrator, county executive to name a few.

How are professional local government managers hired?

Usually, the jurisdiction's elected officials hire the manager through a search process they develop, or by promoting a deputy manager.

Why are professional local government managers hired?

The elected city, town, or county council hires a manager to implement their policies and programs, and oversee the day-to-day business of the government in an ethical, transparent manner.

Are professional managers political appointees?

No. Professional managers are non-partisan and non-political, dedicated to the overall well-being of the community. They are committed to fair use of public resources and respect the rights and responsibilities of both elected officials and residents.

What kind of education and training do they have?

Nearly 67 percent of the managers surveyed by ICMA (the International City/County Management Association) in 2006 indicated they had earned a masters degree, usually in public administration, business, public policy, or some other advanced degree.

Demographics

What is the average tenure of a city, town, or county manager?

Just over seven years, according to ICMA's 2009 State of the Profession Survey.

How long do most managers stay in the profession?

Nineteen years, according to the same survey.

How many managers are women?

Typically, a little more than 23 percent of applicants for ICMA membership are women.

What is the racial and ethnic makeup of professional managers?

In 2009, 95 percent of respondents to ICMA's 2009 State of the Profession survey indicated that they were Caucasian; 2.6 percent African American; .3 percent Asian American; .7 percent Native American; and 1.4 percent other.

What is the average age of professional local government managers?

As of 2006, only 13 percent of professional local government managers were younger than 40 and only 1 percent were 30 or younger.

Duties, Responsibilities, and Skills

Exactly what do professional local government managers do?

A manager's responsibilities can vary from community to community but they will include a combination of:

- Working with elected officials to develop and implement policies and programs
- Managing the day-to-day operations of the locality's government staff
- Using community values and rigorous program evaluation to make choices based on priorities in times of tight budgets, as well as finding creative solutions to meet needs that might otherwise go unmet.
- Coordinating and creating the complex budgets and materials necessary for local governments to apply for bonds and achieve the best-possible bond rating. The better the bond rating, the lower the interest rate taxpayers pay.
- Coordinating the delivery of services such as police, fire, sanitation, street repairs, and upkeep of parks and facilities
- Involving residents, businesses, civic groups, and other members of the community in building communities they're proud to call home

Ensuring that laws and policies are enforced fairly throughout the community

What kind of knowledge and skills do managers need?

Just as a manager's responsibilities may vary from community to community, so, too, do the knowledge and skills s/he needs for the job. They can include:

- Administration—Supervising people, budgets, and projects
- Leadership—Bringing a community-wide perspective, meeting today's needs while planning for tomorrow's, promoting excellence and innovation
- Finances—Ensuring the cost effectiveness of programs, balancing budgets, and securing the financial health of the community

- Management—Mediating, negotiating, encouraging inclusiveness, and consensus building
- Ethics—Commitment to accountability and the highest ethical standards

Compensation

How is the compensation of professional local government managers determined?

It's determined by the governing body doing the hiring, and usually reflects the size and financial ability of the community.

What is the general range of salaries?

ICMA's 2011 report, "CAO Salary and Compensation: The Big Picture," finds the median salary reported for chief appointed officers is \$101,000 annually (meaning that half the respondents earn more and half earn less). The lowest median salary reported was \$65,500 in Maine; the highest was \$185,501 in California. Of course, as with most executive jobs, the salary figure is arrived at by weighing the complexities of the job, the size of the budget the manager would need to manage, the skill set needed to do the job well, and the wage the government can afford.

What other types of compensation can managers receive?

Managers' compensation is commensurate with that of executives of any similarly sized businesses in that it may include items such as pension or retirement, health insurance, etc., but generally it will be less than in the private sector.

Terms of Service and Severance

What kind of job security do managers have?

Local government managers are typically considered at-will employees and can be terminated without cause at the discretion of the council or mayor.

Are they eligible to receive a severance package if they're terminated?

It depends on the employment agreement or contract they negotiate. ICMA's 2011 survey found that 77 percent of managers are eligible to receive severance pay, the amount of which varies mostly based on tenure. In line with standard business practices, the most common amount of severance pay is about six months.