Networks in the City Management Profession

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The Life of City Managers

A Day in the Life of a City Manager

- Ensure that city services are running smoothly and efficiently
- Report to the city council
- Oversee multiple projects and delegate tasks
- Most cities hire from within for this role

The Balance
City Managers

• City managers bridge the gap between politics and the day-to-day administration of city services. In most cities, all departments report to the city manager, who reports to the city council. City managers serve residents by ensuring that city services are running smoothly and efficiently. **However, they also have to balance this against serving the agendas of the city council members who hired them.**
STRATEGY

• A common joke in the city management profession is that all a city manager needs to know is how to count to four since many city councils are made up of seven members. As long as a majority of the council is happy, the city manager has some level of security.
MORE STRATEGY

• **Diplomacy:** Sometimes a city needs to solve a problem and multiple potential solutions are on the table, each with support from different individuals or factions. The city manager needs to find a way to gain support to implement the solution that best addresses the problem without alienating those council members or community members whose plans were not implemented.

• **Ability to delegate:** City managers can't do everything. They need to build a strong staff of trusted department heads who can handle city planning, city finances, parks and recreation, law enforcement, and more.

• **Project management:** Even though city managers can't do everything, nor are all things delegated. City managers often need to be directly involved in important projects, especially ones in areas where the city manager has particular background or expertise.

• **People skills:** In addition to working well with elected city councilmembers, city managers have direct contact with community leaders and citizens. Mayors may be the face of a city from a ceremonial standpoint, but when problems need to be solved or negotiations need to be taken place, the city manager usually is the point person.
TRENDS

• Job Outlook

• City manager positions have a lot of turnover. People rarely hold such a position for more than a few election cycles. New city councils frequently have new agendas that lead to conflicts with sitting city managers. While this leads to a lack of job stability, it also means frequent openings for city managers.
PATHWAYS

• City managers are hired by the city council and mayor. When elected positions change, it is common for the city manager to move on to a job in a new city. Experience will help city administrators build a reputation for excellence and move into higher paying positions throughout their career.
TRENDS

- Often, city managers use the skills they’ve developed to find similar work in the private sector or a more stable part of the public sector. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the need for managers in administrative roles is expected to grow by about 10 percent for the decade ending in 2026. This exceeds the projected growth rate of 7 percent for all positions.
NETWORKS ARE EVERYWHERE

• City Council
• Other communities
• Graduate Schools
• Political Campaigns
• Legislators
• Impact of New Ordinances
Basics Defined

• MPA programs train students to be objective in manner
• Hopefully this translates into possible new hires
• Politically neutral decision making
• ICMA states essentially city managers must eschew political activity
CITY MANAGEMENT AND NETWORKS

• Networks are numerous
• Industry leaders
• City Councils
• Establish new networks of potential new hires
NETWORK STRATEGY

- ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE
- ORGANIZATIONAL REPUTATION
- COMMUNITY VALUES
- WORKING RELATIONSHIPS
- COMMUNITY VERSE PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVE
- CLEAR POLICY DIRECTION
NETWORK POLICY

- FLEXIBILITY WITH CITY COUNCILS
- QUALIFIED RISK TAKING
- SERVICE QUALITY
- KEEP POLITICS OUT
- GOALS GOALS GOALS
- PROFESSIONAL
NETWORKING WITH STUDENTS

- Conferences
- Stay in touch with the graduate schools
- Developing a ledger of hires
- Provide meaningful internships
- Provide meaningful feedback to interns
How Is the Job Outlook for MPA Grads?

Urban/Regional Planner

Projected Job Growth: 7%

A popular career choice for graduates of MPA programs is that of an urban or regional planner. This occupational field is growing steadily, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This means nearly 3,000 new jobs for MPA-holders and other qualified professionals.
MPA graduates are able to pursue a career as a city managers because they have an understanding of the complexities of municipalities, and they have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively run a community. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median pay in 2019 for city managers and other administrative services managers was about $96,000 per year.
Parks and recreation director

• Recreation directors manage long-term and day-to-day aspects of recreation programs. They're responsible for facility scheduling, equipment use records, enforcement of policy and safety regulations, and activities development. The average Parks and Recreation Director salary in Tennessee is $58,219 as of January 26, 2023, but the range typically falls between $46,118 and $71,424.
Public Works Manager

- National average salary: $75,841 per year

- Public works managers are responsible for the administration and oversight of various activities and organizations involved with resources in the public sector.
Community Service Manager

- Median salary: $69,600
- Community service managers supervise and coordinate programs and organizations that support public well-being. Responsibilities can include community outreach, procuring funding, implementing process improvements, and raising public awareness of the organization’s mission.
Emergency Management Director

- Median salary: $76,250
- Emergency management directors are responsible for planning and preparing for emergencies and natural disasters. Their responsibilities can include researching best practices, ensuring plans meet government regulations, disseminating information to the public, and coordinating with local, state, or federal agencies and public safety officials.
Budget Analyst

- National Average Salary $81,137
- Although they don’t usually make final decisions on expenditures, these professionals analyze short- and long-term costs before recommending action. A budget analyst’s job also requires clear communication with management and other stakeholders to ensure the organization has the financial resources to further its mission.
The average Public Housing Manager in the US makes $73,901. The average bonus for a Public Housing Manager is $3,794 which represents 5% of their salary, with 100% of people reporting that they receive a bonus each year. Public Housing Managers make the most in Chicago at $87,437, averaging total compensation 18% greater than the US average.
Environmental Consultant

Environmental consultants are independent professionals who perform research and analysis duties regarding sustainability. Their analyses help with recommendations to increase environmental safety, comply with health regulations, increase energy efficiency and reduce potential harm.

National average salary: $76,169 per year
KEY TAKE AWAYS

• NETWORKING IS ONGOING
• ALWAYS SEEK NEW AVENUES OF SUPPORT
• MANAGE POLITICS
• SEEK THE BEST MPA STUDENTS
• SEE INTERNSHIPS AS APPRENTICESHIPS
• ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD
Sources

• How Is the Job Outlook for MPA Grads? - College Values Online
• City Manager Job Description: Salary, Skills, & More (liveabout.com)