



# What It Takes to Be a Professional Local Government Manager

A quick guide for anyone who's ever wondered how to become a professional local government manager.

## WHY CHOOSE A CAREER AS A PROFESSIONAL CITY, TOWN, OR COUNTY MANAGER?

A career as a professional local government manager is challenging--but extremely rewarding. Few other careers offer the opportunity to have such a positive impact on your community.

As the needs of our cities, towns, and counties have become more complex, so has the job of professional local government managers and administrators. Back in the day, these individuals were recruited from the ranks of civil engineers, who were trained to build and maintain the

community's bridges, roads, and water systems. Today's managers and administrators also possess the management "know-how" to build strong communities, if not from the ground up, then by ensuring the continuous improvement of community services.



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## WHAT SKILLS DO PROFESSIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS BRING TO THEIR COMMUNITIES?

Economically strong, high-quality-of-life communities don't just happen. They require a vision, a lot of planning, and the professional execution of those plans. City, town, and county managers and administrators draw on a wealth of experience and a multitude of skills to get the job done, including

- **Personnel administration:** Providing direction and leadership to department heads and those who provide direct services to the community.
- **Management of public funds:** Ensuring the cost-effectiveness of programs, balancing budgets, and securing the financial health of the community.
- **Program and policy implementation:** Working with elected officials and community leaders to achieve common goals and objectives.
- **Service delivery coordination:** Anticipating and planning for a city, town, or county's future needs.

Above all else, today's professional city, town, and county managers and administrators bring to the communities they serve a commitment to maintaining the public trust and confidence in local government, achieving equity and social justice, affirming human dignity, and improving the quality of life for all.

## Typical Qualifications and Experience

- Many of today's city, town, and county managers and administrators hold bachelor's degrees in public administration, political science, or business.
- Increasingly, these individuals enter the profession with a master's degree, often in public administration or a related field. According to ICMA's 2012 State of the Profession survey:
  - 59% of managers and administrators held a master's degree (MPA, MBA, etc.)
  - An additional 6% had earned either a law or doctorate degree.

- Managers often begin their careers in policy or administrative positions (budget or management analyst) and then serve as assistant manager before becoming a full manager.
- City, town, and county managers also come from a variety of professional backgrounds, ranging from director of planning (4%) to director of finance (6%) to employment with the state/federal government (3%). Many of the managers surveyed (24%) indicated that they had held the position of assistant manager prior to assuming their current CAO position.
- Most appointed local government managers are members of [ICMA, the International City/County Management Association](#), and are bound by its [Code of Ethics](#), which commits members to a set of ethical standards of honesty and integrity that go beyond those required by the law. Also, through its [Voluntary Credentialing Program](#), ICMA recognizes individual members who are qualified by a combination of education and experience, adherence to high standards of integrity, and an assessed commitment to lifelong learning and professional development. ICMA members who meet these requirements may earn designation as an ICMA Credentialed Manager.

## How Do I Get Started?

### Check Out ICMA's Career Resources

[This section of the ICMA website offers:](#)

- Resources for job seekers, employers, students, and teachers.
- Information on internships, fellowships, and coaching and mentoring.
- A selection of career guides, wikis, and documents, including ICMA's popular wiki on choosing a career in the field, [Careers in Local Government Management](#).

### Contact NASPAA

The [National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration \(NASPAA\)](#) is the membership organization of graduate education programs in public administration, public policy, public affairs, and public and nonprofit management. NASPAA's website offers comprehensive information on finding a school of public administration and earning a degree in the field.

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# What Professional City, Town, and County Managers Do

These highly trained experts make a big difference in the communities they serve.

Professional local government managers are hired and directed by the elected city, town, or county council or other governing body to oversee the daily operations of a community or entity. These appointed managers are nonpartisan and nonpolitical. They may have different titles—city manager, town administrator, county executive, to name a few—but they all oversee the day-to-day business of local governments in an ethical, efficient, and transparent manner.

Much like executives who direct private-sector corporations, professional local government managers provide leadership, vision, and a focus on results that is <sup>ICMA</sup> needed to create better communities by



- Managing financial and human resources.
- Overseeing the delivery of essential community services.
- Planning strategically for community development.
- Using performance metrics to drive continuous improvement.
- Committing to the highest level of [ethical standards](#).

While their responsibilities may vary from community to community, professional city, town, and county managers are typically responsible for

- Working with elected officials (mayors and city, town, and county councils) to develop sound approaches to community challenges by bringing together resources that produce results that matter.
- Helping the governing body develop a long-term vision for the community that provides a framework for policy development and goal-setting.
- Preparing a comprehensive annual budget and capital improvement program and managing local government staff, budgets, programs, and projects.
- Overseeing the delivery of local government services, which may include public works; police, fire, and public safety; planning and economic development; parks and recreation; libraries; youth services; resource recovery and recycling; sanitation; and utilities.
- Developing performance measurement systems for local government services.
- Applying for and administering federal, state, and private foundation grant funding.
- Recruiting, hiring, and supervising the local government workforce, including key department heads.
- Preparing council or board meeting agenda materials.
- Bringing a community-wide perspective that considers past and future challenges to policy discussions.
- Encouraging inclusion and building consensus among diverse interests (including those of the elected officials, the business community, and citizens) by focusing on the needs of the entire community rather than the interests of only a few individuals.
- Promoting equity and fairness by ensuring that services are fairly distributed and that administrative decisions (such as hiring and contracting) are based on merit rather than favoritism.
- Developing and sustaining organizational excellence and promoting innovation.



- Ensuring that laws and policies are enforced fairly throughout the community and that the government runs ethically and transparently.

Professional city, town, and county managers establish a commitment to excellence within the local government organization that sets the tone for all employees. These individuals expect staff at all levels, from department directors to line employees, to meet high standards in service delivery, accountability, and ethics. Together, they look for more effective and efficient ways to serve the members of their community.

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### [Inclusive Economic Growth](#)

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ICMA joined diversity, equity and inclusion staff from Norfolk, Virginia, and Kalamazoo, Michigan, for Inclusive Economic Growth, a webinar on the importance of economic inclusion and economic mobility, including an outline of the process of rightsizing an inclusive economic development strategy to pilot in your organization.

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# **CHARTER FOR THE CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION**

## **Subchapter 2: Incorporation and Powers of The City**

### §205 Form of Government

- (a) The municipal government provided by this Charter shall be known as council-manager form of government. Pursuant to its provisions and subject only to the limitations imposed by the State Constitution and by this Charter, all powers of the City of Essex Junction shall be vested in an elective City Council, which shall enact ordinances, codes, and regulations, adopt budgets, determine policies, and appoint the City Manager, who shall enforce the laws and ordinances and administer the government of the City. All powers of the City shall be exercised in the manner prescribed by this Charter or prescribed by ordinance.

## **Subchapter 3: Governance Structure**

### § 301 Powers and Duties of Governing Body

- (a) The members of the City of Essex Junction City Council shall constitute the legislative body of the City of Essex Junction for all purposes required by statute, and except as otherwise herein specifically provided shall have all the powers and authority given to, and perform all duties required of City legislative bodies or Councils under the laws of the State of Vermont.
- (b) Within the limitations of the foregoing, the City of Essex Junction Council shall have the power to:
  - (1) Appoint and remove a City Manager and supervise, create, change, and abolish offices, commissions, or departments other than the offices, commissions, or departments established by this Charter.

### § 305 Compensation

- (b) The City Council shall fix the compensation of all appointees and the City Manager. The Council shall review, approve, and ratify any collective bargaining agreements, which may be negotiated or fixed by the Manager or their designee.

## § 306 Prohibitions and Conflicts of Interest

- (a) **Appointments and Removals.** Neither the legislative body nor any of its members shall in any manner dictate the appointment or removal of any municipal administrative officers or employees whom the manager or any of the manager's subordinates are empowered to appoint. The legislative body may discuss with the Manager the appointment, performance, and removal of such officers and employees in executive session.
- (b) **Interference with Administration.** Except for the purpose of inquiries and investigations under § 301 (b)(4), the legislative body or its members shall deal with the municipal officers and employees who are subject to the direction and supervision of the Manager solely through the Manager, and neither the legislative body nor its members shall give orders to any such officer or employee, either publicly or privately.

## **Subchapter 7: City Manager**

### §701 Appointment/Hiring of Manager

The Council shall appoint a City Manager under and in accordance with Vermont Statutes Annotated, as amended from time-to-time hereafter.

### § 702 Powers of Manager

The Manager shall be the chief administrative officer of the City of Essex Junction. The Manager shall be responsible to the Council for the administration of all City of Essex Junction affairs placed in the Manager's charge by or under this Charter. The Manager shall have the following powers and duties in addition to those powers and duties delegated to municipal managers under the Vermont statutes.

- (a) The Manager shall appoint and, when the Manager deems it necessary for the good of the service, suspend or remove all City of Essex Junction employees, including the Treasurer, and other employees provided for by or under this Charter for cause, except as otherwise provided by law, this Charter, collective bargaining unit contracts, or personnel rules adopted pursuant to this Charter. The Manager may authorize any employee who is subject to the Manager's direction and supervision to exercise these powers with respect to subordinates in that employee's department, office, or agency. There shall be no discrimination in employment, in accordance with applicable state and federal laws, including but not limited to 21 V.S.A. §495. Appointments, lay-offs, suspensions, promotions, demotions, and removals shall be made primarily on the basis of training, experience, fitness, and performance of duties, in such manner as to ensure that the responsible administrative officer may secure efficient service.



(b) The Manager, or their designee, shall direct and supervise the administration of all departments, offices, and agencies of the City of Essex Junction, except as otherwise provided by this Charter or by law.

- (c) The Manager shall recommend hiring of a City Attorney with Council approval and shall hire special attorneys as needed.
- (d) The Manager or a staff member designated by the Manager shall attend all Council meetings and shall have the right to take part in discussion and make recommendations but may not vote. The Council may meet in executive session without the Manager for discussion of the Manager's performance or if the Manager is the subject of an investigation pursuant to § 301(b)(4) of this Charter.
- (e) The Manager shall see that all laws, provisions of this Charter, and acts of the Council, subject to enforcement by the Manager or by officers subject to the Manager's direction and supervision, are faithfully executed.
- (f) The Manager shall prepare and submit the annual budget and capital program to the Council.
- (g) The Manager shall submit to the Council and make available to the public a complete report on the finances and administrative activities of the City of Essex Junction as of the end of each fiscal year.
- (h) The Manager shall make such other reports as the Council may require concerning the operations of City of Essex Junction departments, offices, and agencies subject to the Manager's direction and supervision.
- (i) The Manager shall keep the Council fully advised as to the financial condition and future needs of the City of Essex Junction and make such recommendations to the Council concerning the affairs of the City of Essex Junction as the Manager deems desirable.
- (j) The Manager shall be responsible for the enforcement of all City of Essex Junction ordinances and laws.
- (k) The Manager may when advisable or proper delegate to subordinate officers and employees of the City of Essex Junction any duties conferred upon the Manager by this Charter, the Vermont statutes, or the Council members.
- (l) The Manager shall perform such other duties as are specified in this Charter or in State law, or as may be required by the Council.
- (m) The Manager shall fix the compensation of City employees.

(n) The Manager shall recommend appointment of the City Clerk annually, with Council approval.

#### § 703 Hearing/Removal Process

(a) The Council may remove the Manager from office for cause in accordance with the following procedures:

1. The Council shall adopt by affirmative vote of a majority of all its members a preliminary resolution which must state the reasons for removal and may suspend the Manager from duty for a period not to exceed 45 days. A copy of the resolution shall be delivered within three days to the Manager.
2. Within five days after a copy of the resolution is delivered to the Manager, the Manager may file with the Council a written request for a hearing; said hearing to be in a public or executive session by choice of the Manager. This hearing shall be held at a special Council meeting not earlier than 15 days nor later than 30 days after the request is filed. The Manager may file with the Council a written reply not later than five days before the hearing.
3. The Council may adopt a final resolution of removal, which may be made effective immediately, by affirmative vote of a majority of all its members at any time after five days from the date when a copy of the preliminary resolution was delivered to the Manager, if the Manager has not requested a public hearing, or at any time after the public hearing if the Manager has requested one.

#### § 704 Vacancy in Office of Manager

The Manager, by letter filed with the City Clerk, may appoint a staff member to perform the Manager's duties in the event of the Manager's absence due to disability, incapacitation, or vacation unless the Manager has previously appointed a staff member as assistant manager or deputy manager, who would automatically assume the Manager's responsibilities in the Manager's absence. If the Manager fails to make such designations, the Council, may by resolution appoint an officer or employee of the City to perform the duties of the Manager until the Manager is able to return to duty.

## **Subchapter 9: Administrative Departments**

### § 901 Personnel Administration and Benefits

- (a) The Manager or the Manager's appointee shall be the personnel director. The Manager shall maintain personnel rules and regulations protecting the interests of the City and of the employees. These rules and regulations must be approved by the Council and shall include the procedure for amending them and for placing them into practice. Each employee shall receive a copy of the rules and regulations when the employee is hired.
- (b) The rules and regulations may deal with the following subjects or with other similar matters of personnel administration: job classification, jobs to be filled, tenure, retirement, pensions, leaves of absence, vacations, holidays, hours and days of work, group insurance, salary plans, rules governing hiring, temporary appointments, lay-off, reinstatement, promotion, transfer, demotion, settlement of disputes, dismissal, probationary periods, permanent or continuing status, in-service training, injury, employee records, and further regulations concerning the hearing of appeals.
- (c) No person in the service of the City shall either directly or indirectly give, render, pay, or receive any service or other valuable thing for or on account of or in connection with any appointment, proposed appointment, promotion, or proposed promotion.

### § 902 Real Estate Assessor

There shall be either a real estate Assessor who is a certified real estate appraiser or an independent appraisal firm, headed by a certified real estate appraiser, appointed by the Manager that shall carry out the duties of assessor in the same manner and be subject to all of the same liabilities prescribed for listers under the law of the State of Vermont in assessing property within the City of Essex Junction and which shall establish the grand list thereof and shall return such list to the City Clerk within the time required by state statute.

## **Subchapter 10 Budget Process**

### **§ 1002 Annual Municipal Budget**

With support from the finance department, the Manager shall submit to the Council a budget for review before the annual City Meeting or at such previous time as may be directed by the Council. The budget shall contain:

- (a) An estimate of the financial condition of the City as of the end of the fiscal year.
- (b) An itemized statement of appropriations recommended for current expenses, and for capital improvements, during the next fiscal year, with comparative statements of appropriations and estimated expenditures for the current fiscal year and actual appropriations and expenditures for the immediate preceding fiscal year.
- (c) An itemized statement of estimated revenues from all sources, other than taxation, for the next fiscal year and comparative figures of tax and other sources of revenue for the current and immediate preceding fiscal years.
- (d) A capital budget for no fewer than the next five fiscal years, showing anticipated capital expenditures, financing, and tax requirements.
- (e) Such other information as may be required by the Council.

## **Subchapter 12: Capital Improvements**

### **§ 1201 Capital Programs**

- (a) The Manager shall prepare and submit to the Council a capital program at least three months prior to the final date for submission of the budget.
- (b) Contents. The capital program shall include:
  - 1. A clear general summary of its contents;
  - 2. A list of all capital improvements which are proposed to be undertaken during no fewer than the next five fiscal years, with appropriate supporting information as to the necessity for such improvements;
  - 3. Cost estimates, method of financing, and recommended time schedules for each such improvement; and

4. The estimated annual cost of operating and maintaining the facilities to be constructed or acquired.

The above information may be revised and extended each year with regard to capital improvements still pending or in process of construction or acquisition.



**Village of Essex Junction  
Job Classification Description**

**VILLAGE MANAGER**

**GRADE 13**

**BASIC FUNCTION**

To manage and administer all functions, services and activities of Village government, in accordance with the provisions of the Village Charter, state law and under the policy direction of the Village Board of Trustees.

**CHARACTERISTIC DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Appoint and, when deemed necessary for the good of the service, suspend or remove all Village employees, and other employees provided for by or under the Village Charter for cause, except as otherwise provided by law, the Village Charter or personnel rules adopted pursuant to the Village Charter. The Village Manager may authorize any employee who is subject to his/her direction and supervision to exercise these powers with respect to subordinates in that employee's department, office or agency.
- The Village Manager shall direct and supervise the administration of all departments, offices and agencies of the Village, except as otherwise provided by the Village Charter or by law.
- The Village Manager shall attend all Trustees meetings and shall have the right to take part in discussion and make recommendations but may not vote.
- The Village Manager shall see that all laws, provisions of the Village Charter and acts of the Trustees, subject to enforcement by him/her or by officers subject to his/her direction and supervision, are faithfully executed.
- The Village Manager shall prepare and submit the annual budget and capital program to the Trustees.
- The Village Manager shall submit to the Trustees and make available to the public a complete report on the finances and administrative activities of the Village as of the end of each fiscal year.
- The Village Manager shall make such other reports as the Trustees may require concerning the operations of Village departments, offices and agencies subject to his/her direction and supervision.
- The Village Manager shall keep the Trustees fully advised as to the financial condition and future needs of the Village and make such recommendations to the Trustees concerning the affairs of the Village as he/she deems desirable.

- The Village Manager or his/her designee shall perform the duties of zoning administrative officer.
- The Village Manager shall be responsible for the enforcement of all Village ordinances and laws.
- The Village Manager may when advisable or proper delegate to subordinate officers and employees of the Village any duties conferred upon him/her by the Village Charter, the Vermont statutes or the Trustees.
- The Village Manager shall annually appoint, subject to the Trustees approval, the Village treasurer/tax collector, Village clerk, Village attorney, Village fire chief and Village engineering consultant.
- The Village Manager shall perform such other duties as are specified in the Village charter, state law, or as may be required by the Trustees.
- Exercise full supervisory authority directly over all Village department heads and administrative office personnel, and indirectly over approximately 30-35 Village employees. Plan and conduct training programs and staff meetings. Confer regularly with department heads and staff to plan and coordinate activities, assign and review work, assist with difficult or unusual tasks, resolve problems and the like.
- Serve as a principal Village liaison in conjunction with a member of the Board of Trustees to community groups, residents, government agencies, other municipalities, contractors, consultants, attorneys, media and others outside Village government.
- Demonstrate commitment to the Village of Essex Junction's mission and values as determined by residents and the Village's various boards and commissions.

### **SUPERVISION RECEIVED**

In all matters, the Village Manager shall be subject to the direction and supervision of the Trustees and shall hold office at the will of the Trustees.

### **SUPERVISION EXERCISED**

Administrative and functional supervision, direct and indirect, of all Village employees.

### **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES**

- Master's degree in public administration, business administration or other appropriate discipline, plus 4 to 6 years of relevant technical and administrative experience, or a combination of education and experience from which comparable knowledge and skills are acquired.
- Broad base of technical knowledge and skills related to municipal government operations, including public works, community relations, relevant state and federal law, development grants and so forth. Strong technical knowledge and

skills related to budget and personnel management. Relevant experience with computer, i.e., email, word processing, etc.

- Excellent planning, organizational, administrative, personnel and budget management skills.
- Excellent writing, research, analytical, and general problem-solving skills. Relevant experience in developing policies and procedures, and in interpreting complex laws and regulations.
- Demonstrated ability to deal effectively with, and represent the Village to, a wide range of individuals and groups outside Village government, as well as Village officials and personnel, frequently regarding highly sensitive and/or controversial matters. Good general public relations, negotiating and coordinating skills.
- Demonstrated ability to conduct construction and other field site inspections.
- Ability to travel to meetings in other parts of the state.
- Demonstrated ability to build teams that efficiently serve the public and are effective at implementing the Trustees' policies.

**DISCLAIMER:** The above information is intended to describe the general nature of this position and is not to be considered a complete statement of duties, responsibilities and requirements.

### **EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I acknowledge that I have received this job description. I understand the job to which I am assigned and acknowledge that I can perform the primary duties and responsibilities of the position. I further understand that management has the right to assign job duties and may update the job description from time to time.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **TOWN MANAGER**

### **Definition:**

Administrative and supervisory work in directing the activities of the town's departments, commissions, boards and officers except those elected; all other related work as required.

### **Distinguishing Characteristics:**

Exercises administrative authority over the operations of the municipality in conformance with policies and objectives set forth by the board of selectmen and the laws of the state.

Performs professional municipal management duties of a highly complex and responsible nature, requiring considerable judgment in making administrative decisions, in carrying out town policy, and in overseeing municipal activities.

Supervises approximately ten administrators and department heads directly with final responsibility for 76 full-time employees.

Makes frequent contacts with local, state and federal officials, local business and community leaders, town employees and department heads, and with the general public.

Has access to extensive town-wide confidential information including personnel records, negotiating positions, and confidential investigations.

Little physical effort required in performing duties under typical office conditions.

### **Examples of Work:**

Serves as chief administrative officer of the town; plans, directs and supervises the town's departments, commissions, boards and officers; serves as liaison with various state and federal organizations; establishes goals and analyzes and evaluates programs.

Prepares documents, presents and implements the town's annual budget; prepares warnings for the annual and special town meetings; directs the formulation of the capital improvement program; oversees the community planning efforts, including land use and economic development.

Acts as the town's public safety and personnel director; bargains with employee unions; oversees personnel administration and resolves problematic cases according to established policies and procedures; develops systematic personnel policies and practices for implementation with union and non-union employees.

Supervises the rental and use of all town facilities and is responsible for the maintenance and repair of all town property.

Performs a vital public relations function for the town in dealing with the complaints, criticism and suggestions of citizens, business, industry, developers and builders; performs community development activities on behalf of the town; develops procedures to coordinate the inter-departmental review of development proposals; implements the inter-departmental strategies related to planning and development.

Oversees the competitive bidding process for contractual services; may meet and negotiates with potential vendors and contractors; monitor the progress of consultants and contractors retained by the town.

Work with the board of selectmen on matters affecting town government and matters involving litigation.

Oversees the purchasing of supplies, materials, equipment and facilities; seeks and evaluates opportunities for consolidated purchasing or alternative purchasing arrangements.

Prepares periodic reports to the selectmen; oversees maintenance of statistics; all other work as required by the board of selectmen.

## **RECOMMENDED MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Education and Experience:**

Master's degree in public administration or related field; five year's experience in public management or administration; or, Bachelor's degree in public administration and seven year's experience.

### **Knowledge, Ability and Skill:**

Substantial knowledge of municipal operations. Thorough knowledge of municipal finance, budgets, personnel policies and practices, collective bargaining, state and federal agencies as they relate to municipal government, town charter and policies, federal and state laws. Substantial management skills to direct the work of professional and non-professional subordinates. Ability to represent the town appropriately and effectively. Ability to perform organizational tasks as needed. Ability to work with employees and the general public under conditions of stress.

Must be able to accept constructive suggestions for improvement and have the ability to communicate and work well with others.

### **Physical Demands**

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is frequently required to sit and talk or

hear, use hands to finger, handle, or feel objects, tools, or controls; and reach with hands and arms. The employee is occasionally required to walk.

The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 25 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision and the ability to adjust focus.

### **Work Environment**

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The noise level in the work environment is usually quiet.

Fall of 2017