

TrendLines

SSCRPC — Advising + Planning + Evaluating + Leading

In keeping with the mood of the New Year and ICMA's suggestions (see article to the right), this issue of the SSCRPC's TrendLines focuses on a number of ideas — presented "by the numbers" — that may help local officials in our region improve both government and governance during 2016.

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THE TOPIC: MAKING SOME MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP RESOLUTIONS FOR 2016 — Some Ideas for Local Leaders

As is tradition, a new year marks the time to make promises for self-improvement. We may not always follow them, but even so, the very making gives us a chance to do some planning; taking stock of both our strengths and weaknesses, and then thinking about how we might overcome weaknesses and make better use of our strengths. Assessing strengths and weaknesses is the basis for better planning.

The making of resolutions isn't just for individuals. Organizations and local government leaders can do this as well. This was brought to the SSCRPC's attention as the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) began 2016 by offering three New Year's Resolutions that it believes every local government can add to their list.

The three resolutions suggested by ICMA for 2016 are:

1. INVEST IN CONTINUING EDUCATION.

Improving the knowledge and skills of municipal leaders and their staff is important to both the performance of local governments *and* the careers of their officials, so continuing education is a must. They must stay on top of their careers in order to distinguish themselves from others and acquire the highest level of



professional knowledge available and become a trusted resource for their communities. Moreover, continuing education can provide a fresh perspective in meeting the needs of our communities, which are facing complex and continuously changing challenges.

2. BE MORE INCLUSIVE.

ICMA suggests that to make a difference, municipal leaders and staff need to be able to build and manage a diverse workforce. The SSCRPC sees this as particularly important as the Millennial Generation, those born after 1980, are the future workers and leaders of our communities, and are destined to be the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in American history. Learning more about this generation, how they think and

how they work, is vital to long-term community success.

And finally,

3. MENTOR SOMEONE.

As ICMA points out, there are often people in our lives who have helped shape us personally and professionally. And as noted above, there is a new generation of local government professionals who need help shaping their careers. Remember, mentoring is a two-way experience, helping both those doing the mentoring as well as those being mentored. All involved benefit, including the residents of the communities for whom they do their work.

Source: O'Neil, Robert (Jan. 1, 2016). *3 New Year's Resolutions Every Local Government Leader Can Add to Their List*. ICMA: Washington, DC.

Source: Murphy, Bill (April 28, 2014). *7 Things Great Leaders Always Do (But Mere Managers Always Fear)*. Inc.com: NY, NY.

Seven Ways to Be a Great Leader

It's been said that one manages *inventory* but leads *people*. Continuing this issue of *TrendLines*' theme of making resolutions for 2016, we turn to Bill Murphy Jr., Exec. Editor of *TheMid.com*, and his article for *Inc.com*. There he makes a distinction between great leaders and mere managers, noting the ways in which they are different. While he may be writing about private sector leadership, his thoughts appear just as relevant to the public sector.



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1. A great manager connects daily work with great goals. A mere manager focuses only on the short-term. Murphy argues that it is “easy to get caught focusing on things that are urgent, rather than important. A mere manager spends most energy on the daily grind, and harangues his people for not achieving short-term goals, regardless of their long-term importance”. So, according to Murphy what does a leader focus on? What matters most to a great leader is...what truly matters *most!*

2. A great leader thinks of people as people. A mere manager sees only titles or organizational charts. Murphy cautions that one must beware of referring to and thinking about the people you work with in terms of their titles rather than their names. If you are doing that, “you’re on the road to becoming more of a manager than a leader”. Leaders think of people individually and holistically, working to understand their strengths and weaknesses, goals and interests. Mere managers do not.

3. A great leader wants to earn respect. A mere manager wants to be liked. Great leaders, according to Murphy, aren’t always the most likable people, often because they recognize that “their job is to get people to do things the people might not want to do, in order to achieve goals they want to achieve.” Of course great leaders are cordial, but not if they give up long-term respect for short-term likability.

4. A real leader is thrilled when team members achieve great things. A mere manager is threatened. As mere managers may not believe they have much to their credit, when a team member outgrows her or his role, the manager worries first “about being outshone”. But the great leader takes the accomplishment of team members as a point of pride. While the mere manager may create *followers*, the great leader is developing other *leaders*.

5. A great leader empowers people with honesty and transparency. A mere manager parcels out information as if it costs him or her personally. It's been said that information is power, and Murphy contends that mere managers fear that “sharing information can be tantamount to giving up leverage.” This leads the manager to hold information closely, which ultimately undermines team performance. Great leaders, on the other hand, understand that “all else being equal, transparency shows respect for your team and helps them do good work.” This opinion is echoed in a recent SSCRPC report (see page 9 of this *TrendLines*), where Paul Angone, speaking of the members of the Millennial generation who will be our future municipal leaders and team members, are best engaged when they hear the full story, including your flaws and mistakes: they are not looking for leaders who are *super-human*, but those who are *super-humans*.

6. A great leader understands that if the team falls short, he or she is responsible. A mere manager blames the team. Since a mere manager hasn’t actually earned respect, he or she is constantly afraid of losing power. This means, according to Murphy, that if the team is not achieving its goals, the manager is primarily “concerned about losing his or her role on an organizational chart.” A true leader accepts the responsibility for the team, even if he or she believes a specific team member may have fallen short.

7. A great leader cares mainly about results. A mere manager is more concerned with process. Murphy notes that to be fair, some organizations and their structures are designed to protect processes, and that is certainly true in government where laws exist to ensure due process and reduce governmental over-reach. But even so, the purpose of the organization is to achieve results, and the leader finds ways to achieve these results regardless of process constraints.

Seven Starter Performance Measures for Your Community

Of course one of the resolutions local officials might desire to make in the new year is to improve the performance of their communities. But to do that these officials need to be able to measure current performance. As is often said, you can't manage it if you can't measure it, let alone change it.

EfficientGov offers some measures suggested by Minnesota's Council on Local Results. This council was established by the Minnesota legislature to develop a local standards program, and its measures are based in part on a report by the National Performance Management Advisory Commission. *EfficientGov* points out that the Council on Local Results does not advocate universal use of its measures, but they are offered as examples that communities can use in developing their own local ones. As the examples show, the measures do not have to be complicated to begin performance assessment, and offer a starting point for communities to develop unique local measures.

They are:

1. General Measures

- Overall: Rating the overall quality of services provided by your city. This could be a "Citizen Survey", with options such as Excellent, Good, Fair and Poor.
- Home Values: Percent change in taxable property market value.
- Citizen Rating: This could be a citizens' rating of the overall appearance of the city; again, with survey options such as those noted above.

2. Police Services

- Crime Rates, Part 1: Murder, rape, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson.
- Crime Rates, Part 2: Other assaults, forgery, counterfeiting, embezzlement, stolen property, vandalism, weapons, prostitution, other sex offenses, narcotics, gambling, family/children crime, DUI, liquor laws, disorderly conduct, and other offenses.
- Citizen Rating: This would be another survey of safety in the community, with such ratings as Very Safe, Somewhat Safe, Neither Safe nor Unsafe, Somewhat Unsafe, and Very Unsafe.
- Potential output measures, such as police response time: time it takes on top priority calls from dispatch to the first officer on the scene.

3. Fire Services

- ISO Rating: Rating issued by the Insurance Service Office, using ISO data as a benchmark.
- Citizen Rating: Another citizen survey similar to those indicated above.
- Potential output measures could also be included for fire response time, similar to the one for police.

4. Streets

- Conditions: Average city street pavement condition rating, as tracked through the Pavement Condition Index.
- Citizen Rating on Conditions: Similar to the surveys mentioned above, with such options as Good Condition, Mostly Good Condition, Bad Spots, etc.
- Citizen Rating on Services: Such as a survey on the quality of snowplowing.

5. Water

- Citizen Rating of Water Quality: Similar to those noted above.
- Potential output measure could be operating cost per 1 million gallons of water pumped and produced.

6. Sanitary Sewer

- Citizen Rating: Similar to those above, but focused on the dependability and quality of sanitary sewer.
- Potential output measures could include the number of sewer blockages on the system per 100 connections.

7. Parks and Recreation

- Citizen Rating: A survey on the quality of available recreational programs and facilities, such as parks, trails and park buildings.

Source: EfficientGov. (2012). *Ten Performance Measures to Consider for Your City*. EfficientGov.com: San Francisco, CA.



For an example of another approach, see the SSCRPC's *SangStat* Regional Indicators Project under the Strategic & Comprehensive Planning tab on the Commission's website: www.sscrpc.com.

Source: Farrell, Diana, & Goodman, Andrew (Dec. 2013). *Government by Design: Four Principles for a Better Public Sector*. McKinsey & Co.: Washington, DC.

Four Principles for Better Performance: Government by Design

McKinsey & Company, a global management consulting firm that serves leading businesses, governments, and non-governmental organizations as well as not-for-profits, reports that making progress on society's biggest problems will require governments to make better use of data, involve citizens, invest in employees, and collaborate with other sectors. The firm came to this conclusion after researching hundreds of cases of government innovation around the world, as well as from its hands-on work with governments and interviews with public-sector leaders and thinkers.

In a 2013 report, McKinsey found that governments today work in an increasingly complex environment that must meet an expanded set of demands, at the same time that they are faced with economic uncertainty, rapid social change, technological innovation, increasing citizen expectations, unsustainable debt burdens and shrinking budgets. Governments are not only being called upon to do more with less, but they must do it in highly visible ways if they are to regain the faith of their constituents.

How can they do this? McKinsey says through "government by design", which calls for governmental leaders to favor the "rational and the analytical over the purely ideological, and to be willing to abandon tools and techniques that no longer work." The firm contends that four principles form the basis for government by design: *the use of better evidence for decision making; greater engagement and empowerment of citizens; thoughtful investments in expertise and skill building; and a closer collaboration with both the private and social sectors.*

1. Better Evidence in Decision Making.

This principle emphasizes the importance of governments making use of hard data and statistical analysis to make better informed decisions. This means that they must collect credible performance data, work to constantly benchmark their performance against their peers, and then use the performance data and results of benchmarking to design and improve their initiatives.

McKinsey points out that evidence-based decision making creates real value, both financial and nonfinancial, for citizens, because it allows governments to "assess policy and program effectiveness, measure progress, and engage in a more rational public debate on sensitive topics."

2. Greater Engagement and Empowerment of Citizens.

In general, McKinsey found that citizens find it easier to access the public services of innovative governments than less forward-thinking ones. In fact, more forward-thinking governments easily master the shift from "simply administering services to regularly engaging and empowering citizens, involving them in the design — and, in some cases, the delivery — of these services. This shift is not just about increasing choice and well-being: it's also about boosting government productivity, with the help of technology and the use of open data."

To achieve this end, governments will need to find ways to use innovative channels to make services more "citizen-centric". Becoming more citizen-centric is not just about allowing residents to make use of governmental services on the internet in the same way that they do with the private sector, although that is part of it, but also making government more accessible to citizens by offering such things as one-stop-shops and using mobile government offices.

It also involves actively soliciting citizen input to improve government services. This includes finding innovative ways to allow residents to provide input into regulations, budgets and service provision, and even more simply, allowing them to easily search, view and comment upon these things. It also involves tapping citizens to help deliver better services at lower cost.

McKinsey contends that citizens can play an important role in both the design and the delivery of public services. Simple examples include 311 systems that allow residents to report non-emergency complaints and third-party apps like *SeeClickFix*. This allows the public to do some of the work often done by municipal employees, such as reporting potholes or addressing garbage collection problems. Some communities have even gone so far as to set up programs and offices that work with residents to fund and launch promising projects intended to address identified municipal needs. As McKinsey points out, these programs have citizens, rather than government employees, come up with ideas and do much of the work, reaping the civic benefits of their efforts.

As the firm puts it, “by engaging and empowering citizens to codesign and codeliver public services, governments can not only better meet citizens’ needs; they can also shift some of the burden of accountability from the state to the people, allowing high-quality delivery of services in an environment of constrained resources.”

3. Investments in Expertise and Skill Building.

In the first item in this *TrendLines*, we noted ICMA’s suggested resolution that local leaders invest in continuing education. McKinsey seconds this recommendation.

The firm notes that, “Mission-driven employees are among the public sector’s most valuable assets”, but that many governments are not getting the most out of their employees because they don’t make investments in developing their skills and expertise. For example, while some forward-thinking governments have started to use such tools as value-stream mapping and Six Sigma process improvement, they don’t reach their potential because they do little to build their own internal staff capabilities.

Even when they provide training, they may provide the wrong kind. Far too many governments depend upon public-sector training programs based on classroom lecture sessions and self-study modules, even though adults learn much more through practice and feedback. The most effective governments develop and hone the skills of their employees that truly matter; be they core competencies, job specific capabilities, or broader expertise in strategy and risk management.

4. Closer Collaboration With the Private and Social Sectors.

Finally, to be successful in future years governments at all levels will need to find ways to cross the boundaries of the public, private and nonprofit sectors. As McKinsey puts it, “The need for government to collaborate with the business and nonprofit worlds exists whether government is acting as a consumer of products and services, a provider of public goods, or an economic stakeholder.”

To do this it must first find ways to improve its procurement of products and services. Governments have come under fire about these costs, and local governments will need to find ways to get suppliers thinking more about how to solve tough problems, and then pay only for solutions that work. The firm offers the U.S. government’s Challenge.gov platform, the Department of Energy’s X Prize challenge, and the Blue Button challenge as examples.

Governments will also need to find ways to unleash government’s power as a provider of public goods. Open data — the release of “massive, publicly-held data sets in machine-readable ‘liquid’ form, that can readily be used by developers” — is offered as an example, as it has the potential to “spur innovation among companies and other nongovernmental entities.” Events like the federal governments Datapaloozas resulted in the creation of hundreds of cost-saving apps by entrepreneurs simply based upon the provision of existing government data sets, reducing government costs and encouraging new business start-ups.

And all of this leads to the need for governments to take on a role as both economic shaper and integrator. Governments have the opportunity at all levels to take a high-level view on issues and then bring all of the stakeholders together to work together to solve them. McKinsey offers education-to-employment as but one example, in which governments can work with a number of relevant parties to find ways to move individuals from unemployment to employment.

Dealing with the new challenges that governments face will involve the active engagement of the public, private and nonprofit sectors, and will call for government leaders to become “tri-sector athletes” who are “adept in operating at the intersections of these sectors”, embracing new forms of organization and service delivery that are rooted in partnerships.



Source: Bryson, John M., Quick, Kathryn S., Slotterback, Carlssa S., & Crosby, Barbara, C. (Jan./Feb. 2013). *Designing public participation processes, Theory to Practice, Public Administration Review* (Pp 23-37). American Society for Public Administration: Washington, DC.

Additional suggestions and examples of good practices are included in this article.

12 Guidelines for Improving Public Participation

The previous article concerning the McKinsey & Company's report on improving government performance notes the importance of greater public engagement and participation in achieving success. But how can public participation processes be improved? Many in government know of situations in which a public meeting is called or hearing held, and the public simply doesn't attend. A study by John M. Bryson and his colleagues at the University of Minnesota looked at the research concerning public participation processes and offer some guidelines to help local officials design better ones.

Their approach involves three interrelated and iterative tasks — not necessarily a step-by-step template — as well as 12 design guidelines. *The three basic tasks are to: assess and design for the context and purpose of the engagement; enlist the necessary resources and manage the participation; and evaluate and redesign continuously.*

1. Address Context and Purpose: Ensure that a public participation process is needed, fits the general and specific context, and is based on a clear understanding of the challenge or problem (a part of the specific context) for which public participation is a desirable part of the response.



The general context includes such things as the social, demographic, political, technological, physical and other features and trends that affect your environment, while the specific context refers to those things in your environment that are directly related to the achievement of your goals, such as key stakeholders, applicable mandates, availability of resources, and the like.

2. Identify the Purposes for the Design to Achieve Them: Clarify and regularly revisit the purposes and desired outcomes of the participation process and design and redesign it accordingly.

Clarity about the purpose of the participation process can help avoid unnecessary or unwise expenditures of effort and resources, or challenges to the legitimacy of the process because conflicting ideas about its purpose haven't been resolved.

3. Analyze and Appropriately Involve Stakeholders: Ensure that the design and implementation of the participation processes are informed by stakeholder analysis and involve, at a minimum, key stakeholders in appropriate ways across the steps or phases of the process.

Keep in mind that specific stakeholders may be involved in different ways at different steps or phases of the process.

4. Establish the Legitimacy of the Process: Establish with both internal and external stakeholders the legitimacy of the process as a form of engagement and a source of trusted interaction among participants.

Participation processes are not automatically regarded by either insiders or outsiders as legitimate. Part of establishing legitimacy is letting potential participants know the purpose of the process, or their co-production of it, as well as how their participation will influence the outcome. The tools and techniques you use will also play a role, whether it is one of simply "informing" to a more significant "collaborating".

5. Foster Effective Leadership: Ensure that the participation process leadership roles of sponsoring, championing, and facilitating are adequately fulfilled.

Designing and implementing public participation programs requires effective leadership, and part of that is helping people who face problems with no easy answers come to grips with them. A key practice of this leadership is helping participants stay in a "productive zone" between avoiding problems with not easy answers and being overwhelmed by the nature of the problems they face.

This takes three leadership components: *Sponsors*, who have the formal authority used to legiti-

mize and underwrite the effort; *Champions*, who are in positions of considerable responsibility for managing the day-to-day work of the effort even if they do not have the legitimacy and resources of Sponsors; and *Facilitators*, who structure the participation process, maintain neutrality of outcomes, and help the group to work productively.

6. Seek Resources for and Through Participation: Secure adequate resources, and design and manage participation processes so that they generate additional resources, in order to produce a favorable cost-benefit ration (broadly construed) for the process.

Keep in mind that there will be production costs as well as participation costs, and the participation costs are borne by the participants. These costs may involve trade-offs, and should all be weighed against the anticipated benefits that will be achieved by the process.

7. Create Appropriate Rules and Structures: Create an appropriate set of rules and a project management team structure to guide operational decision making, the overall work to be done, and who gets to be involved in decision making and in what ways.

These provide a bridge between participation processes and organizational structures, and may be embedded in legal mandates or commonly held beliefs about appropriate roles and responsibilities.

8. Be Inclusive to Engage Diversity Productively: Employ processes that invite diverse participation and that also engage differences productively.

Ensuring that all voices are heard and all appropriate interests engaged is a major challenge for those involved in these processes. This includes those normally excluded because of various inequalities. Effective participation is not just the “usual suspects”, and managers of the process should be aware that having increasingly diverse views being presented can increase group conflicts, at least initially.

9. Manage Power Dynamics: Manage power dynamics to provide opportunities for meaningful participation, exchange, and influence on decision outcomes.

The manager of the participation process needs to be wary of it simply rationalizing and reproducing the power of a particular stakeholder group, or neutering differences by assimilating people into the process in order to pacify them. If it does this, it is not truly participatory. The process managers deciding what is put on the table may also place citizens at a disadvantage. Engage participants in “coproducing” the agenda and process as well as weighing in on the policy decisions.

10. Use Information, Communication, and Other Technologies to Achieve the Purposes of the Engagement: Participation processes should be designed to make use of information, communication and other technologies that fit with the context and purposes of the process.

The technologies and information sources available are vast, including GIS, computer visualizations, interactive websites, as well as simple displays and maps. They can help citizens better understand the task, and provide them with tools that are often only available to planners and managers.

11. Evaluation Measures and Process: Develop participation evaluation measures and an evaluation process that supports producing the desired outcomes.

Defining evaluation measures at onset in conjunction with deciding the purposes of the participation process will help managers decide whether to engage in public participation, anticipate the results participation will produce, articulate project goals, and align the participation design with strategies.

12. Achieve Alignments: Align: participation goals; participation purposes; types of engagements; promises made to participants; engagement methods, technologies, and techniques; process steps; and resources in the process.

All of the elements in the engagement process need to be aligned to reduce chances of miscommunication, misunderstandings, and conflicts. Doing this will help reduce the declines in public trust and associated public cynicism about participation that often occurs.

Source: Grass, Michael (Sept. 29, 2015). *10 Questions Local Officials Need to Ask Their Budget Directors About Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability*, Route Fifty. Government Executive Media Group: Washington, DC.



10 Questions Local Officials Need to Ask About Their Budgets

The Great Recession caught many communities throughout the nation off guard, rendering an unexpected economic blow to their budgets. In Illinois, budget conflicts at the state level have exacerbated the problem. So what is a municipal leader to do to ensure that their community will have some fiscal sustainability and stability in the future?

Michael Grass, Executive Editor of *State & Local Government Executive*, offers 10 questions that local officials need to ask about their community's long-term fiscal sustainability developed by Dennis Strachota, who served as management services director for the city of Chandler, AZ, and budget director for Long Beach, CA, and is now on the public finance faculty of the California State University at Long Beach. Strachota believes that these 10 questions — presented in reverse order of importance — should be part of a regular assessment of a local government's long-term fiscal sustainability.

10. How much do we rely on elastic revenues? These revenues include those most affected by economic downturns, such as sales taxes and business income or license fees. If these elastic revenues make up 30% or more of the municipal budget, that could mean trouble even in a mild recession.

9. What has been the population growth in the community over the last five years? More people usually means more revenue, so population growth trends are a good indicator of economic growth and competitiveness. Stagnant or declining rates of population growth are cause for fiscal worry.

8. How much does actual spending vary from budget spending? This serves as a useful reality check, but requires "drilling down" into the numbers. Particular attention should be given to areas in which there is a track record of more than a 10% variance.

7. How much does the General Fund rely on inter-fund transfers? Strachota points out that if your government is moving money from one fund to prop up another, it's a sign of trouble because it is not sustainable to depend upon such one-time revenues. Also, it puts additional stress on otherwise self-supporting operations, having them prop up those that are not.

6. What portion of ongoing spending is covered by ongoing revenues? If that number is 90% or less, the community will need to hope for strong revenue growth "because dependence on one-time resources for ongoing spending eventually catches up with you." Strachota recommends that local governments consider budgeting only 90% of ongoing revenue growth.

5. What percentage of the General Fund is spent on public safety? Public safety is obviously a priority, but the likelihood of fiscal sustainability gets shaky when that amount goes over 60% of the budget. This puts other services at risk. The public safety budget should be "proportional to the size of the department and increases and decreases in public safety spending should be proportional, too."

4. What is the value of capital infrastructure replaced or maintained every year? In tough budgetary times it's tempting to cut the capital budget. But those cuts are also the hardest to make up. Take the long-term view, looking at infrastructure as a 30-year investment, because if it will take more than 30 years to replace your capital infrastructure, there is a serious infrastructure deficit.

3. What is the funding ratio for pensions and post-employment benefits? This is the most challenging question, but an important one as underfunding will mean future taxpayers will be paying for current-day services.

2. What percentage is the unrestricted General Fund balance of total General Fund revenues? Consider 20% the minimum, with greater reliance on economically sensitive revenues (see question 10, above, for example) requiring additional reserves.

1. What will be the cumulative structural budget surplus or gap in three years? "Think long term and assess the impacts of spending proposals. Credible long-term financial forecasts are needed."

For another look at local sustainability from an economic development perspective, see the SSCRPC's report *How Resilient is Our Regional Economy*, listed under the Strategic & Comprehensive Planning tab on the Commission's website: www.sscrpc.com.

All of the Commission's studies and reports can be found on its website in the "Information Center."

Six Trends that Will Shape Online Government in 2016

Many local governments in our region currently host websites that provide information about their community and its services, and that is important as it is the direction in which government services are going. It is also what younger residents — and new businesses looking to expand into your community or locate there — are coming to expect. That being the case, *Vision Internet*, a creator of online solutions for local governments, has shared six trends that the company believes will drive local governments and their interaction with their citizens during this new year.

The company has partnered with more than 700 local government agencies throughout North America to design and develop municipal websites, so is in a good position to identify issues and spot trends that appear common to those they've worked with. Ashley Fruechting, the firm's Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives, says that, "In 2016, creating a successful website will have less to do with technology and more to do with knowing how to apply the technology already built into advanced content management systems in a way that best serves the community."

She sees these six trends as transforming local government websites in the new year:

1. **Content Strategy:** It is the end of the digital file cabinet. Many municipalities are simply using their websites as repositories of documents. Moving forward, local leaders will need to take a step back and ask some simple questions: Do we need this content? Who will use it? Is it the right content for the job? Local governments will need to do a better job deciding what to keep, what to archive, what to delete, and what to write and how to write it, if their websites are to be useful tools.
2. **Customer-Driven Design:** Fruechting says that improving ease of use and the customer experience will be driving local government website design well into the future. Local government sites will need to be small and nimble so that users can take care of common tasks quickly and easily. At the same time, governments should be looking to more modern design tools, like parallax scrolling (where background images move by the camera slower than foreground images, creating an illusion of depth) and video backgrounds, which help communities tell their stories better.
3. **Analytics:** As we've pointed out in an earlier article in this *TrendLines*, you can't manage something you can't measure. More local governments are embracing tools like Google Analytics that make it easier to assess the changing needs and interests of those using their websites. They are becoming more like businesses to the extent that they look at citizens as customers, breaking out of departmental silos to organize web content in consistent ways in order to better deliver the content their residents want, value and need.
4. **Mobile:** Mobility of access across various devices is becoming the de facto mandate for communication at all levels of government. Fruechting says that mobile usage now accounts for 33% of all web traffic; up 27 % in the past year. A recent Pew Research Center study shows that a majority of smart-phone owners use their device to share and access information about local and community events. A recent SSCRPC study shows that younger residents are particularly apt to use smart devices for most of their information needs. A lot of your residents — particularly younger ones — will bypass your site if it isn't mobile friendly.
5. **Accessibility:** Local governments need to be aware of web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG), which are continuing to evolve. Become knowledgeable about WCAG 2.0, ADA, and Rehabilitation Act Sec. 508, and their requirements to remove barriers that prevent interaction with or access to websites by people with disabilities.
6. **Citizen Engagement:** Local governments need to continually analyze their websites to see which sections are most frequently visited and popular, because engagement doesn't happen just because you provide a site. Using the information you gain from this review, adjust your content and strategies to make sure the needed information is available. For example, you may need to create buttons or move them and links around. As Fruechting points out, if you make your site a hub for public engagement, citizens will return again-and-again because they know they will easily find what they need.

Source: Vision Internet (Dec. 23, 2015). *6 Trends that Will Shape Online Government in 2016*, EfficientGov.com.: San Francisco, CA.



Find out more about how America's youngest generation, the Millennials, are getting their information in the SSCRPC's newest report *The Millennials: What Local Leaders Should Know about America's Newest Generation*. It can be found on the Commission's website: www.sscrpc.com.

All of the Commission's studies and reports can be found on its website in the "Information Center."



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Regularly Scheduled Events:

- **The Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission meets in the Sangamon County Board Chamber at 9:30 AM on the third Wednesday of each month unless otherwise posted.**
- **The Springfield Area Transportation Study Technical Committee meets in Room 212 of the County Building at 8:30 AM on the first Thursday of each month, with the Policy Committee meeting at noon on the following Thursday, unless otherwise posted.**
- **The Sangamon County Historic Preservation Commission will meet in Room 212 of the County Building at 4:00PM on the first Wednesday of every month unless otherwise posted.**

A complete schedule of SSCRPC events is maintained on the Commission's website.

ANY SSCRPC DOCUMENTS NOTED IN THIS *TrendLines*, AS WELL AS OTHER ANALYTIC WORK ON CURRENT TOPICS OF INTEREST, ARE AVAILABLE ON THE COMMISSION'S WEBSITE.

About the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission

The Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) serves as the joint planning body for the City of Springfield and Sangamon County, as well as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning in the region.

It is committed to its on-going mission of providing the professional expertise and objective analysis that communities in the region need to assess their opportunities, sharpen their visions, and design the strategies they will need to achieve them.

In carrying out its mission, the Commission works with other public and non-profit agencies throughout the area to promote orderly growth and redevelopment, and assists Sangamon County communities with their planning needs. Through its professional

staff, the SSCRPC brings its research, analytic and planning expertise to bear on such important matters as land use, housing, recreation, transportation, economic growth and development, hazard mitigation, and environmental protection.

Along with publications such as this *TrendLines*, the SSCRPC produces many reports and studies of regional and community interest. These can be found on the Commission's website.



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