

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
FINAL REPORT ON CORE COMPETENCIES AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

BACKGROUND

In acknowledgement of the 100th anniversary of UBCM, a proposal for the establishment of a Local Government Leadership Academy was developed. The Academy would provide ongoing training for elected officials throughout British Columbia and would also serve the needs of senior administrative staff in the context of their interactions with council and board members.

The need for the Local Government Leadership Academy (LGLA) emerged primarily through informal discussion, reflection and observation among those within the local government sector. Although foundation training for elected officials is well established with the UBCM's Newly Elected Official Seminars – offered triennially after local government elections – there is an acknowledged need for follow-up training in leadership, organizational issues and decision-making in the government/public context. As elected officials begin serving their terms, and in many cases subsequent terms, they express the need for ongoing education and support in the development of leadership skills and competencies. And while periodic conferences, training opportunities and courses on a variety of relevant topics are offered by UBCM, other BC local government associations, the Province and certain educational institutions, no coordinated effort to establish a dedicated, comprehensive and ongoing educational program for elected officials exists. Training programs for local government staff members are more widely available, but even in these cases there is still a need to foster productive council/board-staff relations. The LGLA aims to fill these gaps and, in doing so, to respond to the observed and stated needs of elected officials and senior administrators throughout the province.

A draft charter and terms of reference detailing the mission of the LGLA is attached as Appendix A to this report.

ESTABLISHING THE LGLA

UBCM presented the concept of the Local Government Leadership Academy to the Premier in 2005 and he was highly receptive to the idea. The Province has since responded above UBCM's expectations in contributing \$1 million to the foundation of the Academy. This provincial contribution has been received by UBCM and interest on the endowment will be used to ensure there is a program of training opportunities available on an annual basis.

In addition to the provincial contribution, support has also been received from four agencies that have strong ties to UBCM – BC Assessment Authority (BCAA), Local Government Management Association (LGMA), Municipal Finance Authority (MFA), and Municipal Insurance Association (MIA). Each has made a

significant monetary contribution to the establishment of the LGLA and each will be represented on the LGLA Board of Directors.

The structure of the nine-member Board of Directors will be as follows:

- two members appointed by UBCM, one of whom shall be the Chair;
- two members appointed by the provincial government through the Minister responsible for local government;
- two members appointed jointly from BCAA, LGMA, MFA and MIA on a rotating basis;
- one member appointed from the First Nations Summit; and
- two members nominated at large and appointed by the Board.

Board terms will be two years and will be staggered by the appointing bodies. Roles and responsibilities of the Board will be to:

- approve a strategy and business plan;
- approve an annual program of activities and budget;
- establish advisory committees as required; and
- prepare an annual performance report.

The involvement of these key local government agencies in establishing and running the LGLA is crucial to ensuring that Academy programming doesn't overlap with educational initiatives already underway in the BC local government sector. Duplication and redundancy will be avoided through coordinating training efforts among these agencies where appropriate and through effective communication among Board members around existing and planned elected official and staff training programs throughout the province.

In addition to the support received from the aforementioned local government agencies, UBCM has received widespread support among its membership for the LGLA initiative. An invitation to join with the Premier and other LGLA founders in contributing to the Academy was sent to UBCM members by President Marvin Hunt in late 2005. To date, 69 local governments have contributed nearly \$50,000 to the establishment of the Academy – many providing encouraging words of support along with their financial donations. (See appendix B and C for a list of local government contributors and a collection of supportive quotes from UBCM members.)

In return for this support, UBCM members expect a coordinated program that will be responsive to the needs of local government elected officials throughout the province, and which will be run efficiently and with an eye to filling gaps in existing training initiatives rather than duplicating training already offered through other programs. UBCM acknowledges these expectations and intends to put member contributions to excellent use for the benefit of all BC local governments and their citizens. The standards behind the establishment and structuring of the LGLA are high, and the Academy's performance will be evaluated according to how these standards are met. Annual reporting has been

built into the mandate of the LGLA Board of Directors, and course content and structure will be thoroughly assessed on a regular basis and adapted as required.

INITIAL LGLA WORKSHOP

As a preliminary step in developing a curriculum for the Local Government Leadership Academy, UBCM convened a workshop in February 2006 that was attended by provincial representatives, members of UBCM's Executive and staff, representatives of the partnering local government agencies and representatives from the local government education sector. Gordon McIntosh, of the Local Government Leadership Institute, facilitated this session and guided participants through a visioning exercise that led to the identification of the following core competencies (and related characteristics) of successful elected officials. (See Appendix D for a diagram of the emerging Civic Leadership Model and Civic Leadership Chart prepared by Gordon McIntosh following this initial brainstorming session.)

- **Leadership**
 - Accepts challenges willingly and gains the confidence of others by acting in a knowledgeable, consistent and ethical manner.
- **Understanding**
 - Possesses a good understanding of local government systems, the public service context, the community's historical context and the multiple interests of citizens.
- **Accountability**
 - Accepts personal responsibility, assumes a "team player" role and ensures appropriate corporate oversight of organizational operations and program delivery.
- **Facilitation**
 - Ensures an accurate definition of the key issues, uses an effective decision-making process and seeks common ground among stakeholders.
- **Prioritization**
 - Acknowledges opportunities and limitations, assesses available resources and considers community needs and values before making difficult decisions.

- **Big Picture Vision**
 - Is open minded and objective, assesses implications and consequences, and values intergovernmental and interagency relationships.
- **Stewardship**
 - Recognizes the need for sustainability in organizational activities, processes, systems and programs and seeks to establish a corporate legacy that respects community interests.
- **Public Engagement**
 - Respects the principles of good governance by listening to the ideas and concerns of citizens and engaging the public through established channels of consultation.

In assessing and reporting on the workshop findings, Gordon McIntosh suggested the development of a Civic Leadership Competency Chart that would elaborate on each of these competencies and provide related training options and success indicators to be utilized in developing the LGLA curriculum. Several specific elements would be identified under each leadership competency and each element would then have a suggested training focus and measures to gauge participant success in that training area. The following diagram illustrates this concept:

Civic Leadership Competency - Facilitation -	Training Options	Success Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates effective meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules of order • Strategies for chairing effective meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains order • Ensures a respectful decision-making environment • Ensures all views are heard and good debate takes place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures stakeholder participation in decision making process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding community interest groups • Relationship building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that effective consultation takes place • Achieves stakeholder buy-in on major decisions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes difficult decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving skills • Ethics in decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a decision-making process • Is able to defend choices made

The end goal would be a well-rounded educational program covering core competencies common to all civic leadership positions. In developing the LGLA curriculum, a suite of core programs could form the basis of the Academy, complemented by specialized programs for unique civic positions and organizational settings and optional programs addressing more specific competency characteristics or strategic issue applications.

The following is a snapshot view of a potential Local Government Leadership Academy curriculum area:

Community Stewardship
<u>Core</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership styles • Public involvement strategies • Organizational improvement systems
<u>Specialized</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program evaluation techniques – senior staff • Stakeholder consultation processes
<u>Optional</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation techniques • Alternate revenue strategies
<u>Application</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning sustainable communities • Developing community spirit

The core competencies agreed upon by participants at the initial brainstorming workshop in February 2006 provide a solid stepping-stone in crafting curriculum focus and content for the LGLA. Likewise, the suggested trajectory for program development outlined by facilitator Gordon McIntosh will be useful once work on establishing course offerings begins in earnest.

VALIDATION OF CORE COMPETENCIES

Following this initial workshop, a Civic Leadership Questionnaire (see Appendix E) was developed by Gordon McIntosh in the interest of validating the core competencies discussed above. Attendees at UBCM’s Chief Elected Official

Forum completed the questionnaire in May 2006 and it was sent to all UBCM member municipalities in June 2006. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire for the targeted elected official positions of Chair, Mayor and Director or Councillor.

In analyzing the survey results, Gordon McIntosh determined that respondents considered all of the previously identified competencies to be of higher than average importance, thereby validating their retention in the Civic Leadership Model. It is important to note that these core competencies were validated by all elected officials and that there was relatively little variation between the responses of Mayors, Chairs, Councillors and Directors.

The leadership profile of the Chief Elected Official emerged as the following list of eight core competencies:

- 1) Acts Ethically
- 2) Accepts Personal Responsibility
- 3) Considers Community Needs
- 4) Listens to Ideas and Concerns
- 5) Makes Difficult Decisions
- 6) Is Open-Minded and Objective
- 7) Seeks to Find Common Ground
- 8) Represents Multiple Constituents

The overall Elected Official leadership profile (including Mayor, Chair, Director and Councillor responses) emerged as a very similar list of core competencies:

- 1) Acts Ethically
- 2) Accepts Personal Responsibility
- 3) Considers Community Needs
- 4) Is Open-Minded and Objective
- 5) Engages Public in Process
- 6) Makes Difficult Decisions
- 7) Listens to Ideas and Concerns
- 8) Assesses implications

Among the respondents to the questionnaire were 18 local government staff persons, who provided a slightly different competency emphasis – favouring an organizational versus constituent focus – for Mayors and Chairs. Sensitivity to administrative needs and priorities and attention to public service principles and ethics were perceived as important, and there was an expectation that the Chief Elected Official should endeavour to buffer staff from the political activities of the Council or Board.

Overall, the results of the Civic Leadership Questionnaire indicate widespread support among the local government sector for the core competencies identified in the February 2006 LGLA workshop. It follows that these competencies can be used, with confidence, as a basis for the establishment and development of an Academy curriculum.

LINKING CORE COMPETENCIES WITH KEY ISSUES

The identification of core competencies is a key step in establishing a focus for Local Government Leadership Academy curriculum development, but it will be equally important to ensure that Academy courses and programs reflect, and are set in the context of, key issues of the day. Linking instruction in leadership competencies with practical issues that local government elected officials and staff face on a daily basis will be crucial to providing relevant course offerings.

UBCM conducted a strategic issues survey of its membership in late 2005 (see Appendix F), the results of which should be taken into account in developing the initial LGLA curriculum. The top-ranked issues identified by respondents to this *Looking Forward – UBCM Second Century Survey* were:

- 1) Creating a Vision for the Future of the Community
- 2) Ensuring Water Quality and Supply
- 3) Protecting the Environment
- 4) Promoting New Economic Development Opportunities
- 5) Exploring Creative Revenue Generating Opportunities
- 6) Developing and Implementing Action Plans
- 7) Replacing Existing Infrastructure and Facilities
- 8) Enhancing Public Perceptions and Awareness of Government
- 9) Determining Short- to Longer-Term Directions
- 10) Strengthening Leadership Principles and Skills
- 11) Determining Community Needs
- 12) Ensuring Transparent and Effective Decisions
- 13) Developing New Infrastructure and Facilities
- 14) Obtaining Public Involvement in Local Government Decisions
- 15) Establishing and Sticking to Priorities

In developing LGLA programs, the core leadership competencies should be set in the context of these existing issues – thereby ensuring the relevance and real-time applicability of the curriculum. It will also be important to consult BC local governments on a periodic basis to update and revise this key issues list – as well as the core leadership competencies – in order to ensure that the LGLA is continually adapting and evolving to meet the changing needs of local government elected officials and staff.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE LGLA

As noted previously, stakeholder buy-in to the LGLA concept has been secured, along with adequate funding, and initial brainstorming has taken place. Based on the findings of the February 2006 workshop, the subsequent core leadership competencies questionnaire and the 2005 strategic issues survey – and considering the known needs that inspired the establishment of the LGLA in the first place – it is now time to move ahead with curriculum development.

The first task of the LGLA Board of Directors will be to consult experts in the field of local government education and guide the preparation of a well-rounded

course of studies for local elected officials, keeping in mind the need to involve senior staff in areas of council/board-staff relations. Courses should fill gaps in current educational offerings and should ideally be offered at several locations around the province. Various local government agencies and educational partners will be instrumental in both curriculum development and course delivery, and should be thoroughly consulted at this early stage (e.g., Local Government Management Association, Capilano College, University of Victoria, Royal Roads, etc.). A second smaller and more focused workshop might be considered – attended by experts in local government training and select members of the LGLA Board.

A crucial next step will be hiring a part-time Program Manager, who will be responsible for implementation of Academy programs – including course design and content, hiring instructors and managing ongoing LGLA operations. A basis of operations should also be selected for the Academy and marketing and contact information distributed among BC local governments as soon as appropriate.

Initially, it was anticipated that LGLA course offerings would commence in early 2007 but this now seems ambitious. If the Academy is structured around a set of core courses offered in logical succession, it may take some time to determine a regular intake system (e.g., annual, biannual, etc.). Appropriate course start and end dates and a potential order for core courses are important considerations. In addition, it may be advantageous to consider incorporating a distance education component into some or all of the courses offered through the LGLA – thus ensuring that as many communities as possible throughout the province are able to take advantage of Academy training.

The involvement of senior staff in the context of relations with elected officials is another important element to consider, as is First Nations involvement in LGLA programming and governance – a stated goal of the Academy. These considerations and others crucial to the success of this undertaking (such as seeking elected official feedback on proposed course offerings) will take some time to address. It is therefore proposed that the inaugural meeting of the LGLA Board of Directors focus on determining a plan of action for addressing these and other issues. Of primary importance will be hiring a Program Manager and settling on a strategy for curriculum development. Once this process is underway, considerations such as those mentioned above can be addressed one by one until the Academy is ready to admit its first students.