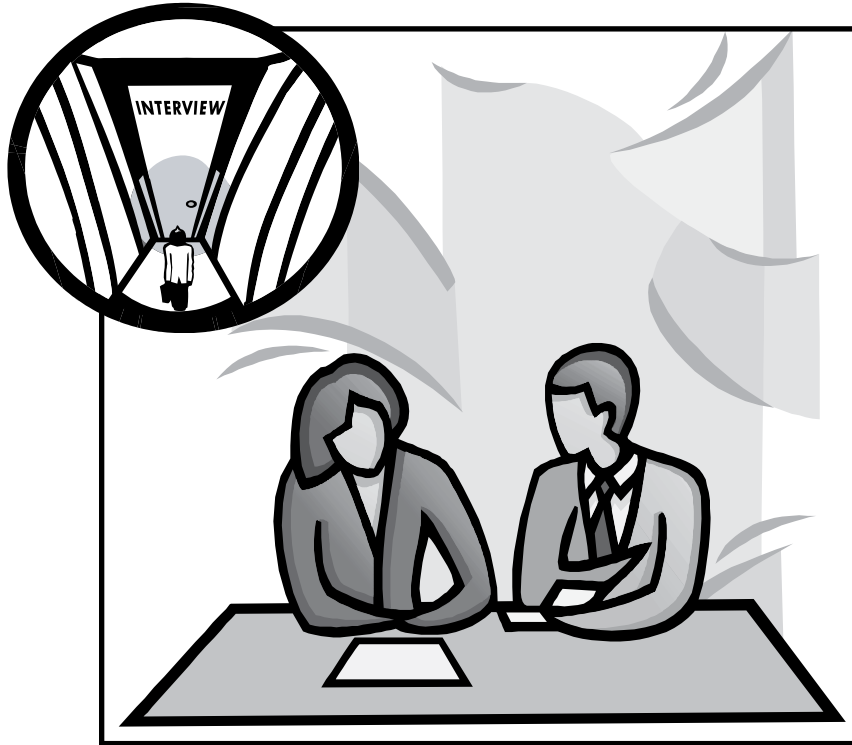


# Hire Smart

## Guide for Local Government Leaders



## Acknowledgements

VML thanks David K. Donaldson, deputy city manager of Wilsonville, Ore., for authoring this useful publication. Donaldson worked in the executive search industry for 12 years before accepting his current post in Oregon. During that tenure in the private sector he completed more than 200 recruitments for cities and counties, including 50-plus city managers and county administrators.

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# Introduction

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Elected local government officials across the country are continually hiring new managers, administrators or executives. This is often the single most important decision that many of these elected officials will make during their tenures.

As in all hiring decisions, the primary goal is to find someone who will work successfully not only with the council or board, but also with the staff and community.

This publication offers a straightforward approach with suggestions to improve the ability of elected officials to “hire smart.”

Six steps to hiring smart are reviewed, beginning with the important first step of developing a profile of the ideal candidate.

Recruiting and advertising, screening, interviewing, checking references and managing negotiations and employment agreements also are covered.

A brief, common sense approach to each step is reviewed, along with keys to success and common mistakes to avoid.



# I. Profile development

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Most local governments have established the city manager, town manager or county administrator position by charter, resolution or ordinance. The language often includes the duties, role and authority of the position. Cities, towns and counties may also have a job description developed for the position similar in format to those of other positions. This information provides a solid foundation, but it is no substitute for a well devised profile that addresses the question “What are we really looking for in our new manager or administrator?” In other words, what makes a good fit and how do we define, recruit and screen for it? The purpose of developing a profile is to address these very issues.

## Why is it important to develop a profile?

- Develops screening criteria with which to evaluate candidates.
- Helps focus elected officials on what is most important.
- Establishes guidelines and group consensus on issues, such as salary range, qualifications, timing, etc.
- Provides potential candidates with insight for their own evaluation to determine if they want to apply.

## What should be included in a profile? Checklist for success.

### Minimum requirements for education and experience

Most public agencies require applicants to have the minimum of a bachelor’s degree in a relevant field. With the large number of universities and

colleges offering degrees at night and on weekends, it is rare to find local government administrators (or assistants) who lack these credentials. It is estimated that more than 70 percent of city managers and county administrators nationwide have advanced degrees (MS, MPA, MBA). In addition, the International City/County Management Association recently started a program in which managers can

become credentialed through a combination of experience, education and professional development.

The issue of experience is more complex. Many communities firmly require local government experience in some capacity. Typically, this is gained as the manager/administrator, assistant manager/assistant administrator or department head in a city, county or town. Today, many elected officials have favorable impressions of private sector managers who bring business experi-

ence. In addition, many communities are receiving increasing numbers of applicants of recently retired military officers with experience managing bases and military communities.

Because operating an effective local government is complex and requires a variety of skills and knowledge, interviewing candidates with local government experience who can “hit the ground running” is usually a good idea. Candidates should also have significant leadership and management experience and a track record of success working for elected or appointed boards or committees.



## **Management approach, style and personal traits**

Perhaps nothing sets candidates apart more clearly than their leadership style and personality. Most elected officials will focus consciously or subconsciously on the style of their past administrator or manager as a frame of reference. This can often lead to the “cloning effect” if they liked the manager/administrator, or the “pendulum effect” (someone who is opposite) if they did not like the person. Elected officials should keep this in mind as they consider the type of manager they would like to hire.

Personal traits such as honesty, strong work ethic, integrity, intelligence, excellent oral and written communication skills, etc., are desirable for any manager. Although these are extremely important, they are not very useful in developing a specific profile that will answer the question “What are we really looking for in our next manager?”

What often sets managers apart is their approach to management and leadership. This includes key attributes such as:

- How do they lead and motivate staff?
- How do they make decisions?
- How do they react to crisis and problems?
- How do they establish/maintain relations with elected officials?
- How do they react to criticism?
- How much and what type of responsibilities do they delegate?
- How visible are they in the organization and community?

## **Specific skills and expertise**

Many communities need different skills and aptitude in their managers at different times to complement basic core skills. These skills can often be influenced by the size of the organization and expertise of the staff. Elected officials need to consider their organization and community’s current and long-term needs.

## **Core skills and experience**

- Budget and finance
- Personnel
- Management
- Council relations

## **Commonly needed experience**

- Planning and land use
- Economic development
- Redevelopment
- Transportation and public works
- Water and sewer utility
- Labor relations and collective bargaining
- Information technology

## **Specialized experience**

- Airport
- Electric & gas utility
- College community
- Racially diverse community
- Resort community

## **Compensation**

The amount a community decides to pay its manager can often have an effect on the quality and quantity of applicants. Most elected officials are sensitive to the public perception of compensation and many take it into account. The factors that influence the decision on salary range that should be considered include:

- Previous manager’s compensation.
- Market rate paid for other similar positions in the immediate area.
- Salaries paid to comparable public sector positions in community (school superintendent., etc.)
- Salary of highest paid department head. Most organizations believe that it is appropriate that the city manager, county administrator or town manager should be paid at least 5 percent to 10 percent above the highest paid employee reporting directly to him/her.
- Financial condition of the local government and community.

All of these factors should be considered and discussed and a range with a spread of roughly \$10,000 to \$15,000 developed (example \$70,000-\$80,000).

This does not commit the council, but it does give potential applicants a sense of the salary before they decide whether or not to apply. Salary ranges that are under market will typically produce fewer quality

candidates. Conversely, salary ranges that are inappropriately high can create controversy and bring unwanted publicity, scrutiny and resentment to the new manager. The council's willingness to accept an employment agreement should be discussed. These typically include a severance agreement. (Employment agreements are discussed in depth beginning on page 15.)

## **Geography**

Many communities will recruit only in their state, while others believe in regional and even national recruitments. This, of course, can vary based on the size of the community, uniqueness of state issues and laws, etc. This will influence where to advertise and recruit. In general, it is wise to focus on people in the same region, but never overlook national candidates, particularly those who have worked in the region at one point in their career.

## **Keys to success**

1. Gain group consensus on as many of the aspects of the profile as possible.
2. Define the concept of "fit" for the job and community.

## **Common errors to avoid**

- Making the profile so tight it excludes good candidates.
- Overreacting to previous manager (cloning or pendulum).
- Focusing only on local candidates.

# II. Advertising and recruitment

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## Advertising

To produce the best possible pool of candidates, positions should be advertised in appropriate professional journals, publications and on Web sites. In addition, communities often will advertise in general circulation newspapers in their community or region to present an opportunity for all to apply. Appropriate professional publications and Web sites include:

**ICMA newsletter** (biweekly) –  
[www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org) (Job Center)

**Government Jobs** – [www.govtjobs.com](http://www.govtjobs.com)

**National League of Cities** –  
[www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org)

**NACo News** (for counties, monthly) –  
[www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org) (Jobs Online)

**Virginia Municipal League** –  
[www.vml.org](http://www.vml.org)

**North Carolina League of Municipalities**  
– [www.nclm.org](http://www.nclm.org)

**Maryland Municipal League** –  
[www.mdmunicipal.org](http://www.mdmunicipal.org)

**Tennessee Municipal League** –  
[www.TMLL.org](http://www.TMLL.org)

**Other state municipal leagues** –  
[www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org)

**The Washington Post** – [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

**Richmond Times-Dispatch** –  
[www.timesdispatch.com](http://www.timesdispatch.com)

**The Virginian-Pilot** – [www.pilotonline.com](http://www.pilotonline.com)

**Daily Press of Newport News** –  
[www.dailypress.com](http://www.dailypress.com)

**The Roanoke Times** – [www.roanoke.com](http://www.roanoke.com)

**The News & Advance of Lynchburg** –  
[www.newsadvance.com/](http://www.newsadvance.com/)

**The Daily Progress of Charlottesville** –  
[www.dailyprogress.com/](http://www.dailyprogress.com/)

## Key elements for an effective advertisement

- The job announcement and the profile should be placed on the local government's Web site. Make sure that your community has an attractive, informative, up-to-date Web site that will present your position in the best possible light. This address should be in the advertisement, along with an e-mail address to apply.
  - Give facts. Give the reader a sense of the scope of the job by including population, number of employees, budget, etc.
  - Give specific desirable requirements. Glean from the profile the education and specific education desirable.
- Attract attention. Market the community in the best way possible through the use of positive adjectives and key descriptors (for example progressive, dynamic, etc.)
- Give a rough salary range, or state current salary in addition to open and "depends on qualifications" (DOQ). This helps candidates determine if they should apply.
- Establish a timely filing deadline. Give a date that gives the reader at least three-to-four weeks from the date of publication, but not more than six-to-eight weeks.



## Common mistakes to avoid

1. Being too specific or rigid in the requirements.
2. Having too quick a turnaround time. Gives the impression that the selection has already been made and may screen out applicants who do not see publications immediately.
3. Running advertisements in numerous general circulation papers that produce large numbers of unqualified resumes and inquiries.

## Advertising for diversity

Many local governments would like to attract candidates who reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Many will merely put EOE (Equal Opportunity Employer) in their ad. Specific organizations and associations targeted to minorities that may be considered include the National Forum for Black Public Administrators ([www.nfbpa.org](http://www.nfbpa.org)) and the International Hispanic Network ([www.international-hispanicnetwork.org](http://www.international-hispanicnetwork.org)).

In addition, general circulation newspapers in areas with large minority populations may be considered, including *The Washington Post*, *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and *Atlanta Journal Constitution*.

## Acknowledgment of resumes

Resumes received by the local government should be logged in with a brief letter mailed back to the candidate acknowledging receipt of the resumes, along with the timetable the recruitment will follow. The same list can then be used to notify all candidates of the outcome of the search. This can be done electronically for those who apply via e-mail.

## Recruitment

To enhance the quality of the candidate pool, local governments may want to recruit potential candidates to apply. Candidates can be recruited in one of the following ways:

- Direct mail or direct e-mail.
- Posting at meetings and conferences.
- Direct telephone calls and word of mouth.
- Executive search firms (reviewed in more depth on page 16).

## Developing a recruitment strategy

- Try to identify candidates who fit the profile.
- Determine in what jobs likely candidates who are at the appropriate salary and level of responsibility may be working.
- Determine who is the best appropriate person to recruit (mayor, human resources director, etc.)

## Direct mail

Profiles can be mailed or e-mailed with a letter of invitation to apply to potential candidates. The letters should also ask for assistance in recommending potential candidates, if those solicited are not interested. Profiles can also be sent or forwarded to individuals who would not likely be potential candidates (municipal league directors, city or county managers of very large cities, etc.) asking for their assistance both in spreading the word and giving direct recommendations. Ideally, at least 50-75 profiles should be sent.

## Posting at meetings and conferences

Depending on the time of year, cities may want to post the advertisement or circulate the profile at the following meetings: Virginia Local Government Management Association meeting (June); Virginia Municipal League Annual Conference (October); and Virginia Association of Counties Conference (November).

## Direct telephone calls and word of mouth

After the profiles have been mailed, the mayor, designated council member or human resource director may want to follow-up with a telephone call to determine if there is interest or questions. Uninterested potential candidates can then be quizzed for their recommendations.

## Common mistakes to avoid in recruiting

- Recruit candidates in such a way that they can later be evaluated objectively with all candidates. Do not align or promise anything until the candidate is thoroughly screened.
- Qualify candidates from nearby communities before recruiting them. This can prevent future embarrassment or awkwardness if the candidate does not get selected or make the first cut.
- Recruiting the wrong people. This can prove embarrassing if candidates with checkered histories and pasts are encouraged to apply.

# III. Resume screening

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The key to resume screening is to have a logical, consistent approach based on the criteria developed in the profile. A good approach is to have several readers review all of the resumes and sort them into three categories: yes (definitely meets and/or exceeds requirements), no (lacks necessary experience), and maybe (borderline). A second reading of the maybes is then needed to reduce the group to about 10-15 for more serious consideration. Education and experience are subjective and relatively easy to evaluate. The inexact science of reviewing resumes is that management style, personal traits, etc., are nearly impossible to detect. The following is a good starting point for a checklist as the resumes are reviewed.

## Experience

Does the person have the necessary experience at the appropriate level? Most good resumes will give the reader a sense of the size and scope of the job someone is doing. This includes the size of the community, organization, budget, etc. When this information is missing, you can do your own research relatively quickly by consulting the candidate's local government Web site. Be careful. Community population is not always a good comparison. Some relatively large cities have large contract operations and few employees, while some smaller cities offer a full range of services for a service population that far exceeds their resident population. Look for depth and variety of experience, especially in areas of importance, such as budget, economic development, etc. In addition, time permitting, use of a search engine can be helpful in finding out information about both the candidate and their community.

## Stability

Has the person shown stability in their career, or has the candidate had several short-tenured positions? It is customary for candidates to change jobs several times in their 20s and early 30s as they move up the career ladder to positions with increasing responsibility. The average tenure of a city/county manager is about four years and the ICMA Code of

Ethics suggests managers provide communities with at least two years of service before leaving voluntarily. One or two short tenures can be acceptable, but when a pattern develops as managers move into their 40s and 50s, it is important to be cautious, as the cycle will likely continue. Look for gaps in employment that can often be signs the person was fired or terminated. Also, beware of the chronological resume that lists only years of employment (example: 1992-1993) and not months. This can be

a way to disguise the length of time in a position and also cover gaps in employment.

## Education

Look at both the quantity and quality of education, as well as evidence of continuing education. As candidates move into their 30s and 40s, education becomes less and less important.

## Resume

Some candidates are more skillful in developing their resumes than others. This is most evident in



resumes that are marketing oriented and persuasive. They typically are visually appealing and list accomplishments and achievements. Many are in the three-to-five page range. Other resumes are more factual historical summaries that tell the reader little about what the candidate has actually achieved and are quite brief, usually one-to-two pages. It is important not to be overly impressed by a dazzling resume or underwhelmed by a straightforward dry document. The ability of candidates to write and deliver a quality resume is one factor in evaluating their judgment and skills, but it should not be the only factor. Most professionals should understand the components of a good resume and how to present themselves in the most positive light. Computers have allowed resumes to be more versatile and professional in appearance. Beware of the functional resume that tells the reader a great deal about skills, but little, for example, about military officers and others who want to disguise their backgrounds and tailor them to a local government position.

## **Cover letter**

Cover letters often reveal important information about a candidate and should not be overlooked. Good candidates will use the cover letter to highlight their background and strengths, as well as their motivation and interests. They are usually one or two pages. The cover letter may also reflect the reader's writing style and ability to communicate effectively.

## **Supplemental questionnaires**

Some local governments require applicants to submit answers to as many as 10 written questions. This information can prove helpful in some cases, but it can also be a disincentive to applying if the questions are too demanding and time consuming. Many excellent candidates who are busy in their own jobs may not respond. Conversely, some entities view the supplemental questionnaires as a way of testing commitment, as well as a good way to probe in areas that resumes do not always cover.

## **Telephone interviews and video conferencing**

When a city or county receives a large number of resumes and is having a difficult time reducing the group to a manageable list, a quick 10-15 minute telephone interview can be an excellent way to obtain information and gain a sense of a candidate's level of interest, motivation and communication skills. Video conferencing can also be useful for conducting short interviews with people who work far away. Most metropolitan areas have facilities that can easily be rented. Telephone interviews can also be a good first step before deciding to bring in candidates from distant states. It can be a good time to check salary expectations if the candidate is earning (based on information volunteered or estimated based on their current job) more than the position they have applied for with your organization.

## **Geography**

Candidate location can often be a simple and quick way to screen resumes. In most cases, it makes sense to focus first on candidates from the same region or state. There are definite advantages to being familiar with state laws and issues, as well as having contacts and connections that will benefit the local government. It can often prove beneficial, however, to examine candidates from other states or regions who are similar and who fit the rest of the profile well. Many of these candidates may have previous work experience or connections to a specific area.

# IV. Interviewing

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The first question that councils and boards must address is how many candidates to interview. This exact number can be a function of the quality of the applicant pool and the time available. The key is to interview enough candidates to provide different perspectives and alternatives. A good number is usually no fewer than four but no more than six or seven. Of course, these numbers can vary based on the amount of pre-screening that was done, along with consideration of interviewing internal and local candidates who are unlikely to be hired but are deserving of an interview.

## Keys to a successful interview process

- Develop prepared questions that address the key issues highlighted in the profile. The questions should be well thought out and ask for examples whenever possible. Avoid only standard questions that candidates can easily anticipate. This is a good way to avoid the “snow job” that often occurs with well-prepared candidates.
- Be consistent in the delivery of the same questions to all candidates.
- Maintain flexibility in allowing questions that are specific to one candidate that will have a bearing on how they are evaluated.
- Probe responses that sound good by verifying with specific examples.
- Encourage participation by all members of the interview panel. This involvement will allow candidates to focus equally on everyone and allow

them to direct follow-up questions to the person asking the question.

- Consider supplementing the interview process with a case study or presentation to the council or board. Pick a topic that is relevant or current and ask the candidate to make a 10-minute



presentation with their recommendation.

- Allow an appropriate amount of time. This is typically 60-90 minutes for a first interview.

- Hold interviews in well-ventilated, attractive places where people are comfortable and at ease.

- Treat candidates with dignity and respect. Make them feel welcomed.

- Consider having a social with the candidates (spouses can also be invited) before the interviews to get to know them more

informally and one-on-one.

- Consider the benefits of a community tour and/or briefing by department heads.
- Determine whether a second interview will be conducted and set the dates for all interviews well in advance.
- Avoid illegal questions related to age, marital status, race or religion.
- Allow candidates five minutes to ask any questions they may have of the council or board. You can learn a great deal about candidates based on what questions they ask.
- Consider the interests and wishes of spouses. This includes tours and/or meetings with potential employees to gauge their job prospects.

# V. Checking references

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The first question when discussing reference checking is at what point in the process should it begin. Many organizations wait until after interviewing candidates before they begin to check references. This often is too late because they already have made up their mind and the references rarely have an effect. Sometimes there is no choice but to wait because candidates are sensitive to having their employer contacted. In general, it is a good idea to check a few references on each finalist before they are interviewed. Search on Google or a similar search engine, along with making a cursory review of local newspaper(s) and the local government's Web site.

General guidelines for reference checking include the following:

- Have a prepared list of questions before calling the reference, but do not hesitate to ask follow-up questions based on responses.
- Qualify the reference by asking about their relationship with the applicant.
- Do not put a great deal of value in reference letters. They often are written by employers who have terminated someone but “want to write them a nice letter of recommendation.”
- Establish a rapport with the reference by asking easy, non-threatening questions first (i.e., What are the candidates strengths and most positive talents?).

- Try to find one or two references the candidate didn't give, but make sure the loss of confidentiality will not negatively affect the candidate.
- Make a site visit to the candidate's community if you want to talk to references first-hand. Site visits should be limited to not more than two candidates and should include both scheduled and impromptu



meetings. Remember, it can be difficult to reject a candidate after a site visit so make sure that all other avenues are covered thoroughly first.

- Ask specific questions about topics the reference may only address unless they are specifically asked. These questions cover topics such as sexual harassment suits or claims, bankruptcies, personal or legal problems, drunk driving, terminations,

highly controversial media coverage and scandals.

- Verify educational credentials by calling the university registrar's office. This should be done on all finalist candidates before inviting them for an interview.
- Listen for inconsistencies between the way candidates come across in person and how their references evaluate them.
- Try to make a few reference calls before you commit to interview a candidate who may have some baggage or question marks in their background.

- If you get one bad reference on a person, do not necessarily eliminate them. Probe more about who the reference is and whether they have a grudge or an ax to grind. Probe other references to confirm or deny the negative issues that have been raised.
- Listen closely for pauses and hesitations. They can often tell you as much as what people say.
- Understand that references may not want to give you negative information because they do not want to hurt a candidate's chances, and because they may want to rid their organization of the person. Evaluate the quality of a reference by the level of enthusiasm and the depth of the comments. Ask for specific examples to back-up both positive and negative comments.

## **Common errors in checking references**

- Checking references too late in the selection process. Many organizations use reference checking as the final step after they have already made up their mind.
- Selectively listening and not probing areas that need to be explored.
- Not asking specific questions. Many references will not volunteer information unless specific questions are asked.
- Talking only with references who are friends, professional peers or colleagues who lack recent experience working with the person. The best references will be those who have frequent and close working relationships with the individual and who can comment on their day-to-day skills, such as management, council relations, etc.

# VI. Salary negotiations and employment agreements

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The relationship between a candidate and council begins with the negotiation of a salary and compensation package. This can often be a tense time because the council or board may view itself in a position of power and believe that if the candidate wants the position the candidate will take what is offered. At the same time, the candidate may adopt the position that if the council really wants him or her, they will pay what is requested. At this point, candidates have the most leverage they will ever have regarding their level of compensation. The goal in negotiations should be to find common ground where both parties believe the level of compensation is fair and equitable. The key often ties back to the early stages of the search where a range was developed and communicated to candidates.

The factors that most influence compensation offers made by councils or boards are:

- Salary of incumbent or previous city manager, town manager or county administrator.
- Salary of highest paid staff member.
- Current salary of applicant. This may not always be fair in that salaries can vary greatly based on housing costs, etc.
- Focusing on the lower end of a range with the opportunity for growth with proven performance.

Candidates' salary demands are often based on the following factors:

- When people change jobs it is their opportunity to improve their financial position and thus often seek at least a 10 percent to 20 percent increase.
- Opportunity for professional growth and challenge.



- Difference in cost of living and housing.
- Opportunities for work for their spouse at the same level in which they are employed.
- Perceived stability and volatility of the position.
- Focusing on the higher end of the range and getting as much as they can to start, as raises may be limited in the future.

## Other aspects of compensation

Depending on the size and past precedent of a community, the following other issues may be part of the salary negotiation:

- Automobile or automobile allowance (typically ranges from \$350 to \$650 per month).
- Medical and dental insurance. Same as other employees with the city, town or county, often also picking up family coverage. In recent years, there has been more cost sharing with even the city manager paying a portion.
- Deferred compensation. Dependent upon the

retirement plan the agency offers, many managers may also seek additional deferred compensation (often ICMA Retirement Corp. – up to \$14,000 annually).

- Moving expenses. The minimum is typically to pay for all moving costs of household items.
- Temporary living expenses. Many cities may help with the transition by offering assistance with an apartment or rental unit for a set period of time if candidates have been unable to sell their home.

## **Employment agreements**

The career of a city manager, town manager or county administrator is often quite volatile with their job security at risk with each meeting of the council or board of supervisors. Because of the at-will nature of the manager/administrator position and the turnover and change among elected officials, many candidates may seek some protection or job security either through a contract or a severance agreement that provides a continuation of salary and benefits for a set period. The most common approach to this issue is the development of an employment agreement that provides details on the conditions of employment along with a severance agreement. The terms of the severance agreement are contingent on the person not being terminated for reasons of gross negligence or malfeasance. The typical severance agreement ranges from 3-to-12 months, with the average at about six months. It is not unusual for candidates considering highly volatile positions where many past managers have been fired after short tenures to seek 12 months severance or more.

## **Keys to successful negotiations and contracts**

- Seek to find common ground and an understanding of the important issues and concerns for the candidate and the employer.
- Be flexible and creative in finding ways to structure a compensation package that both parties find acceptable.
- Make sure the salary range is clear and well defined before the recruitment effort begins. Maintain some flexibility but also avoid unrealistic expectations.
- Get it in writing before any announcements are made to the press. Extend an offer letter clearly indicating all aspects of the compensation package. Have the candidate sign the letter and return it before any announcement is made.
- Involve an attorney in the drafting or review of any employment agreement.

# VII. Summary and conclusion

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This publication provides an overview of the recruitment of a city manager, town manager or county administrator, along with straightforward tips on how to “hire smart.” In reality, every community is different and may have different standards and practices. One universal factor, however, is the desire to make hiring decisions that benefit the local government and the community. The more time and effort that is expended in the recruitment selection process, the more likelihood of success. The six steps highlighted are key ingredients of any successful recruitment and should be helpful as councils and boards select new managers and administrators.

## Executive search firms

In the 1970s, the executive search industry in the public sector began to take off with cities, towns and counties across the country hiring headhunters to assist them in the recruitment and selection of managers, administrators and other key local government execu-

tives. Today, more than 30 public sector executive search firms exist and the question has changed from, “Do we use an executive search firm?” to “Which one?” The option of a search firm is one that councils may want to consider. The services provided by a firm include the following:

- Development of the recruitment profile.
- Recruitment of candidates and placement of ads.
- Screening of resumes down to top 10-15.
- Reference checking.
- Assistance with all aspects of process and negotiations.

Search firms are listed in the back of Public Management Magazine (ICMA). They advertise regularly in the ICMA newsletter. Costs typically range from \$14,000 to \$25,000 plus expenses.

