

P M

ICMA

PUBLIC

MANAGEMENT

Celebrating 90 years!

AUGUST 2008

Council-Manager Government at 100: Growing and Making a Difference

ICMA

■ BENCHMARK RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

The Public Entity Risk Institute (PERI), a nonprofit research institute focused on risk management training and education, has created an online, analytical tool designed to help local governments benchmark their risk management programs. Data Exchange Dashboards present statistical comparisons online in charts and figures that allow quick, comparative assessments with similar organizations.

The dashboards are interactive, Web-based graphic reports displaying data in graphs, charts, and meters. These risk management metrics are color coded and feature mouseovers to show how a public entity compares against a selected benchmark.

To learn more about the PERI Data Exchange program and Data Exchange Dashboards, visit www.riskinstitute.org. PERI has created a short video to demonstrate how dashboards help with public sector benchmarking. The video can be found in the Data Exchange section on PERI's Web site at https://www.riskinstitute.org/per/component?option=com_deeppockets/task/catShow/id,51/Itemid,80/. This site also provides a sign-up form for the data exchange program, information on submitting data, and a subscription request form for ordering dashboard reports.

PERI (www.riskinstitute.org) is a nonprofit research institute focused on risk management training and education.

■ THE HISTORY OF PARKING GARAGES POINTS TO SUSTAINABLE DESIGNS FOR THE FUTURE

Most people want to ignore, cover up, or bury parking lots underground. But

architect Shannon Sanders McDonald in her book, *The Parking Garage: Design and Evolution of a Modern Urban Form*, explores the history of parking lots and calls for their continued evolution as important modern-day structures.

Published by the Urban Land Institute (ULI; www.uli.org), the book is illustrated with hundreds of photographs. It highlights best practices and demonstrates how well-designed parking positively affects project success and the urban environment. The book addresses sustainability, including green roofs, and it addresses bicycle garages and provides a review of environmentally friendly construction methods. The book also focuses on the need for a holistic approach to garage development.

The Parking Garage: Design and Evolution of a Modern Urban Form (Urban Land Institute, 2007, ISBN 978-0-87420-998-3, \$87.95) is available at Amazon.com and through the Urban Land Institute at www.uli.org/bookstore; call, 1-800-321-5011. For more information, contact Peggy Meehan at 202/332-2303; e-mail, peggy@highnooncommunications.com.

■ SANDY SPRINGS, GEORGIA'S SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

December 1, 2005, 8:00 a.m., marked a bold new beginning for Sandy Springs, Georgia: the city opened its doors for the first time and began providing all general municipal services through a contract with a private sector engineering firm. After a 30-year struggle for self-determination, this suburban community of almost 100,000 residents had become a city.

The leaders of this movement to become an independent city determined early that the status quo, characterized by high costs and poor services, was no way to run a government. They shifted their sights to how to best use non-traditional methods to build a model government operation for the 21st century. Their vision was to establish an

accountable and responsive government built on the concepts of customer service, efficiency, innovation, and value.

The election of a group of forward-thinking city councilmembers made this vision a reality. One of the first matters for consideration by the new council was a vote to outsource all services possible. The city's \$29 million first-year contract with a private company was established to provide all general government services, including planning and zoning, public works, facilities, information technology, human resources, administrative support, revenue collection, financial management services, procurement, purchasing, communications, transportation planning, capital project planning and management, parks and recreation, code enforcement, plans review, permitting, and municipal court services.

Sandy Springs operates under the council-manager form of government, and the mayor and council set policy and make the laws governing the city. The city manager is appointed by the mayor and council and is responsible for the day-to-day operation of all government services, including police, fire, emergency management, and general government functions.

In Sandy Springs, the city manager is responsible to the council for overseeing the contract for the provision of general government services.

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUTSOURCING MODEL

The Sandy Springs service delivery model is built on the premise that the government will provide a superior level of customer service in all areas. To accomplish this goal, the city, through its contract, established a 24 hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week Citizen Response Center (CRC), where trained customer responders answer calls.

No calls are answered by an automated voice system. CRC serves as the first point of contact for most residents and for business inquiries, and it processes calls and routes requests for service to the appropriate department for action. After the customer request has been completed, a return call is made to let the customer know the matter has been

resolved. For the past 12 months, CRC has processed more than 160,000 calls.

The Sandy Springs contract for services and the relationship it has with its private sector partner has several unique features that help set it apart from traditional governments:

- Reach-back assistance to corporate headquarters for specialized expertise that is not typically resident at a local government.
- Significant flexibility in reallocating resources within the contract.
- Regularly scheduled replacement of operating equipment.
- Prompt mitigation of any personnel deficiencies.

REACH-BACK ASSISTANCE

Operating governments at all levels has become increasingly challenging, and communities can find that they do not have the resident expertise on staff to address complex issues.

Because of Sandy Springs's contract with an international engineering services company with more than 23,000 employees, it has access to a broad range of professionals to assist with finding innovative solutions to difficult issues. We are able to request technical assistance on a broad range of topics like meeting federal stormwater requirements; analyzing municipal water systems; evaluating software records systems for police, fire, and emergency medical services; and finding ways to create sustainable communities.

FLEXIBILITY IN REALLOCATING RESOURCES

Demands on municipal service departments can change for any number of different reasons.

Because of budgetary constraints, bureaucratic rules, and entrenched civil service systems, traditional governments don't always have flexibility to reallocate resources to respond to changes in demand. The outsourcing model in Sandy Springs allows for the expeditious shifting of resources when the need arises, allowing us to respond quickly to changes in customer service requests.

We are often able to shift resources

(equipment, services, and personnel) from one service area to another without changing the overall terms of the contract. If we exceed the resources available in the contract, however, we would then have to agree on a change in scope of services and negotiate an appropriate fee for additional services rendered.

SCHEDULED REPLACEMENT OF OPERATING EQUIPMENT

The right technology can be a powerful service multiplier in today's workplace. But the rapid development of new and improved applications and the updated equipment needed to support them have cut the average useful life for software and hardware to just a few years.

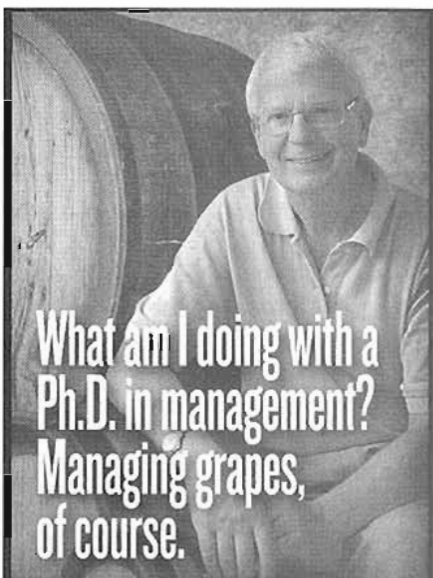
Recognizing that these tools are perishable and must be updated regularly in order to remain relevant, we set up our contract to call for industry-leading technology replenishment every 36 months. This schedule allows for adequate lead time to evaluate, test, procure, install, and use these necessary tools.

The great benefit to the city is avoiding the significant up-front costs associated with having to purchase and replace traditional information technology systems.

PROMPT MITIGATION OF PERSONNEL DEFICIENCIES

At one time or another every organization experiences personnel challenges that have an impact on its ability to perform its mission effectively. In most traditional governments, because of civil service systems and other personnel rules that make it difficult to replace nonperforming employees, it often takes months or even years to make changes in personnel assignments.

Under the Sandy Springs outsourcing model, general government employees are on the contractor's payroll and provide service to the city. If an employee is not meeting expectations, the private company may take immediate action to make a change in personnel. In an instance where I believe a change needs to be made, the contract allows the manager to ask for an immediate re-



What am I doing with a Ph.D. in management? Managing grapes, of course.

Jean-Pierre Wolff, who earned his Walden Ph.D. in 1998, dreamed of owning a vineyard. So he quit his job and bought one. Now he's a successful "winegrower," noted for both his four-time gold-medal-winning Petite Sirahs and the sustainable manner in which they're made. Dr. Wolff credits his smooth career transition to Walden's online doctoral program. "You learn how to learn," he says. "It changes how your mind processes information."

Walden University is an accredited institution with 38 years of experience in distance education. However you define success, our more than 20 online graduate and bachelor's programs will help you gain the knowledge and credentials to achieve it. Just as Dr. Wolff is finding success in a sunny field of grapes.

For more of Dr. Wolff's story, go to WaldenStories.com.

WALDEN
UNIVERSITY

A higher degree. A higher purpose.

ADVANCED DEGREES ONLINE
FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS

1-888-889-5301 WaldenU.edu

Walden University is accredited by
The Higher Learning Commission and a member of the
North Central Association, www.ncaahc.org; 1-312-263-0456.

A MEMBER OF THE LAUREATE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES NETWORK

ICMA

Calendar of Events

For information about ICMA events

Visit icma.org/calendar

August 5

Audioconference: *Baldrige Criteria: What it Takes to Be High-Performing*

August 15

Application Deadline
Fall 2010 Emerging Leaders Development Program Class

September 21-24

ICMA 2008 Annual Conference, Richmond, Virginia

September 21

Prevention Programs: *Proven Strategies for Achieving Results A Local Government Management Seminar*, Richmond, Virginia

October 1

ICMA's Voluntary Credentialing Program, Application Deadline

October 16

Audioconference: *ICMA Leading Ideas Series: Bob O'Neill: "A Whole New Mind--Moving Our Communities from the Informational to the Conceptual"*

UPCOMING IN 2009

February 12-13

Leading Practices Conference, ICMA Leading Ideas Series: *"A Whole New Mind--Moving Our Communities from the Informational to the Conceptual,"* Grove Park Inn, Asheville, NC

Young Leadership Professional Institute

March 4-5, Savannah, GA

March 18-19, City TBA, NJ

April 1-2, Greater Chicago area, IL

April 15-16, Boulder, CO

ICMA Regional Summits

March 5-6, Southeast, Savannah, GA

March 19-20, Northeast, City TBA, NJ

April 2-3, Midwest, Greater Chicago area, IL

April 16-17, Mountain Plains / West Coast, Boulder, CO

April 25-May 2

ICMA SEI, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

placement or reassignment of an employee.

Under the outsourcing model, the private sector receives incentives [Author: Is] receives incentives correct?] to perform and ensure prompt action when personnel issues arise.

VIABLE OPTION

During the past two years, the Sandy Springs model has shown that outsourcing general government services to the private sector can work extremely well. Residents indicate they are pleased with the improved level of service and the value they are receiving for services provided.

Our resident customers continue to comment that they like to be able to contact a live person to discuss their issues 24 hours a day, and they appreciate the fact that they will receive a prompt response to their inquiries.

At a time when resources available at all levels of government are becoming increasingly difficult to come by, communities have a choice: continue business as usual by cutting services and raising taxes or look to the efficiencies of the private sector as a viable option to provide essential services.

All one needs to do is visit Sandy Springs to see that the vision of the city's founders to establish an accountable and responsive government is alive and doing extremely well.

—John McDonough
City Manager

Sandy Springs, Georgia

John.McDonough@sandyspringsga.org

NATIONAL HAZARDOUS MATERIALS FUSION CENTER

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) is leading the development of a new data center, commonly known as the Hazmat Fusion Center, which will collect and analyze hazardous materials incident data to enhance overall first responder safety, tactics, operations, policy and training. This is

being done in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA).

There are four program areas established within the cooperative agreement; work group activities, regional incident survey teams (RIST), hazardous materials community activities, and fusion center infrastructure assessment. Since conception in late 2007, each program area has exhibited significant progress toward the overall vision for the center.

Work group activities. The Hazardous Materials Advisory Work Group (HMAWG) is currently composed of 22 members representing a cross-section of the hazardous materials response community, industry, and government that includes representatives from the U.S. DOT PHMSA and the IAFC. During the first HMAWG meeting held in November 2007, the work group established the initial vision for the Hazmat Fusion Center, recommended forming a RIST subcommittee and a data subcommittee, and agreed that the first RISTs be established in the Houston, Texas, and Chicago, Illinois, areas.

The most recent HMAWG meeting was held in Houston, Texas, on March 11-12, 2008, where work group members continued development efforts for the Hazmat Fusion Center. Members of the group graciously continue to volunteer their time to oversee the growth of the center by participating in monthly teleconferences and quarterly meetings.

RIST activities. The RIST subcommittee currently has 17 members who also represent a cross-section of the Hazmat response community. This subcommittee is dedicated to the development of RISTs, specialized incident support teams, that will be invited by the local or state Hazmat team to respond to significant hazmat incidents for information gathering (lessons learned and best practices) purposes.

The RIST subcommittee has worked diligently to develop the RIST team member and leader selection process, write position descriptions, research equipment needs for the RISTs, compose a list of frequently asked questions

08-021