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Experiences and Good Practices in Transparency, Public Engagement, Budgeting and Improvement of Public Services in USA

January 2021

Online training on Zoom platform

Thursday, January 21, 2021 - BEST PRACTICE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

This session will cover best practice communication strategies for local governments. In addition to discussing the methods and tools commonly used, e.g., press releases, press conferences, events, and social media platforms, the session will focus on overall strategic communication, including speaking with one voice, audience-centric communications, developing defining the goals that local governments want to achieve, key messages, and using traditional and digital media. The session will provide examples from municipalities in the USA, including strategic communications plans, how municipalities train leadership staff to enhance their communications skills, developing creative events for communicating a message or promoting city services, and targeting communications to specific audiences.

12:00 – 12:15 Introductions/Background

12:15 – 13:30 New Approaches for Municipal Communications

Strategic Communication

- Communicating with One Voice
- City Branding
- Understanding your Audience/ Citizen Centric Communications
- Push Communications
- Consider Both the Message & the Messenger
- Provide Opportunities for Engagement
- Measure & Evaluate
- Develop Media Relationships for Ongoing Communication

13:30 – 14:00 Break

14:00 – 15:30 Communication Tools for Local Governments

- Press Releases
- News Conferences
- Interviews
- Media Events
- Social Media
- Traditional Media Sources
- Video Production

CASE STUDY: City of Tallahassee Communications Strategy Case Study – Weems Road Project Improvement

Closing Thoughts

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24 Makenzijeve, Belgrade, Serbia

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Friday, January 22, 2021 – CONFRONTING CHALLENGES WITH CITIZEN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Local governments throughout the world are challenged by the lack of public interest and participation in their government. This session will continue discussing best practices and strategies for public engagement and will focus on how to target specific groups within the community.

Participation and engagement by citizens are critical for ensuring that programs and services address citizen concerns and provide public value. The session will include a discussion on how municipalities can develop partnerships with specific groups to assist in engaging youth, businesses, etc. The session will discuss how the City of Tallahassee has partnered with the Chamber of Commerce, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and the faith-based community to develop strategies to increase citizen engagement.

The session will provide some recent examples of citizen engagement activities in Tallahassee and across the USA.

12:00 – 12:15 Introductions/Background

12:15 – 13:30 Engaging Citizens in Local Government

- Creating a Culture of Civic Engagement
- Open Public Forums
- Easy Access to Services & Information
- Transparency

Practices for Citizen Engagement

- Integrated Approach
- Crowdsourcing
- Social Media
- Citizen Committees

13:30 – 14:00 Break

14:00 – 15:00 Practices for Citizen Engagement (continued)

- Community Organizations

CASE STUDY: City of Tallahassee Frenchtown Neighborhood First Plan

Closing Thoughts

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Monday, January 25, 2021 - BUDGET AND FINANCES – DIVERSIFICATION OF REVENUES SOURCES, REVENUE POLICIES, AND THE AUDIT PROCESS

Local governments are facing significant challenges as a result of the current worldwide pandemic. As the slowdown of economic activity has impacted revenues, it is crucial to ensure that local governments still have the resources to provide critical public services to their communities. This session will discuss best practices related to local government revenues and the diversification of revenue sources. Best practice on ensuring a structure that does not rely on a few revenue sources but instead provides a mix of different types of revenues, e.g., taxes, user fees, transfers from other governments, or impact fees, will be discussed. The session will also cover revenue policies, revenue rate studies (to ensure revenues are recovering costs for services, etc.), and revenue monitoring.

The audit process is also an essential process for local governments, and this session will discuss the City of Tallahassee's relationship with the internal and external auditors. The session will include how management can leverage the audit function to implement organizational and program changes.

12:00 – 12:15 Introductions/Background

12:15 – 13:30 Best Practices in Municipal Revenue Policies

- Components of Good Financial Management
- Impact of Revenue Policies
- Local Revenue Policy Making
- Revenue Structure for Resiliency
- Property Tax, Other Tax Revenues, Service Charges & Fees
- Pricing/Rate Studies

Recommendations for Revenue Structures

- Revenue Financial Policies
- Assessing Revenue Composition/Mix
- Revenue History

13:00 – 14:00 Break

14:00 – 15:00 Recommendations for Revenue Structures (continued)

- Test for Financial Condition - Revenues
- Long-term View of Revenue Sources
- Cost Recovery
- Transparency to Public/Communications
- Revenue Manuals

Using the Audit Function to Assist with Organizational Change

Closing Thoughts

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Tuesday, January 26, 2021 - PREVENTING CORRUPTION THROUGH TRANSPARENCY, OPEN GOVERNMENT AND A CULTURE OF ETHICS

This session will discuss how local governments can implement a basic framework to help mitigate fraud and corruption. The session will discuss functional reforms, transparency & open government initiatives, a culture of ethics, and mechanisms for reporting fraud and whistleblower protections.

As it relates to functional reform efforts, the session will focus on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of providing government services to reduce person-to-person exchanges in the transaction of services, including lowering overly burdensome procedures and processes and automating transactional processes.

The discussion on transparency and open government initiatives will focus on ensuring that processes such as the hiring of personnel, solicitation of procurements, accounting of finances, and other areas are open and transparent. The discussion will also focus on easy access to local government information, e.g., contracts, personnel records, budgets, and financial statements. Open government also provides citizen input opportunities on issues being considered by the local government before the governing body making a final decision.

The session will also discuss how local governments can create a culture of ethics to mitigate fraud and corruption. The discussion will focus on implementing core values and performance evaluation systems linked to the core values and creating a code of ethics. Implementing conflict of interest policies, creating policies regarding expectations of employee behavior regarding the use of city property for personal gain, conflict of interest disclosure requirements, and financial disclosure requirements for certain high-level positions will also be discussed.

Finally, the session will discuss how local governments can establish procedures and processes for filing complaints regarding ethics violations or potential abuse of power/corruption/theft, etc. The discussion will include policies related to whistleblower protections.

12:00 – 12:15 Introductions/Background

12:15 – 13:30 Local Government Integrity

- Public Expectations for Public Officials & Employees
- Factors Affecting Opportunities for Corruption
- Local Government Risk Assessment Plan
- Key Integrity Pillars
 - Culture/Code of ethics.
 - Gifts and hospitality.
 - Conflicts of interests.
 - Financial Disclosures.
 - Human resource management and development.

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- Budget and financial management and reporting.
- Asset management and disposal of assets.
- Land dealings, real estate registration and land inventories.
- Urban planning.
- Local public procurement.
- Managing security of information.
- Management of social housing.
- Regulatory functions.
- Local public service provision.
- Internal audit.

13:30 – 14:00 Break

14:00 – 15:00 Reform Efforts in Public Services

- Automation of Administrative Processes
 - Payroll
 - Cash Payments
 - Permit Applications
 - Procurement

Whistleblower Policies & Protections

Closing Thoughts



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