What Do Texas City Managers Value? An Examination of NASPAA Accreditation Standards

by

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to describe the degree of importance current city managers place on their knowledge, skills, and abilities using the NASPAA common curriculum components for professional master's degree education. Curriculum components are used to assist in the NASPAA accreditation or re-accreditation process for universities across the United States. The methodology involves surveying current city managers operating in small cities of population 25,000 or less via e-mail. Descriptive statistics, as in percentages and modes, are used for describing the responses. The results indicate a majority of city managers believe a majority of the NASPAA curriculum components are very important in their roles.

Chapter 1: Introduction

<u>Research Purpose</u>

The first advertisement for a city manager position in the United States was on

October 14, 1912 in Sumter, South Carolina. The posting is as follows.

> The City of Sumter hereby announces that applications will be received
> from now till December the first for the office of City Manager of Sumter.
> This is a rapidly growing manufacturing city of 10,000 population, and the
> applicant should be competent to oversee public works, such as paving,
> lighting, water supply, etc. An engineer of standing and ability would be
> preferred. State salary desired and previous experience in municipal
> work[1].

The latest advertisement for Sumter, South Carolina, now with a population of

42,700, was posted on July, 1, 2005. The posting reads as follows.

> Requirements include Bachelor's Degree in public administration/related
> field & 5 years related municipal government experience, preferably as a
> manager or assistant manager. Prefer Masters Degree with strong
> interpersonal skills and ability to build strong working relationships
> through open & direct communications, teamwork, & customer service.
> Experience desired in finance, budgeting, municipal utilities, human
> resources & other related local government functions. Salary
> commensurate with education & experience[2].

Comparing the vacancy announcements for a city manager illustrates the degree

to which the occupation has changed. In less than a century, the city management

profession has elevated from one of narrow concentration into one requiring a high

caliber of individual knowledge, skills, and abilities. Thousands are currently employed

in large and small cities across the United States. Since 1996, the council-manager form

of government has increased from 48 percent to 53 percent in local municipalities

(MacManus 2003). In most communities with the council-manager form of government,

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[1] Pg. 69 of Richard Stillman's book *The Rise of The City Manager*.
[2] Job posting received from Sarah Boykin, an administrative assistant from the City of Sumter.

a city manager represents the highest-ranking and most influential appointed administrator at the municipal level. She is responsible for overseeing all city services, regardless of population size and amount of employees or subordinates accountable for designated departments and functions.

City managers are supposed to be "Philosopher kings and high-powered analysts" (Crewson and Fisher 1997). This means mastering the art of non-technical functions like politics and negotiation and the science of technical functions like financial management. Since their roles as community leaders have expanded, so must their base of knowledge, skills, and abilities. They are still evolving, changing as the environment and citizen needs dictate (DeSantis 1998).

Yet inquiry into what city managers value professionally is unclear. This is especially true for smaller cities with population sizes of 25,000 or less. Buckwalter and Parson's (2000) study on city manager career paths found that most city managers in the United States are men, less than fifty years of age, who manage cities of 25,000 or less. For many city managers, these smaller municipalities are used as a professional training ground where knowledge, skills, and abilities can be nurtured and developed. Crewson and Fisher reiterated this point. In a 1997 study, they found evidence that due to fewer resources, administrators in smaller cities have a larger need for administrative techniques and skills than their counterparts in larger cities (Crewson and Fisher 1997)[3].

In addition, many local governments have failed to grow local managers from within. One of the reasons for this inaction involves the cutting of funding for training and internships (Benest 2005). Less populated cities may be most impacted because of limited resources and smaller numbers of government employees.

[3] Smaller cities are defined by Crewson and Fisher as having populations less than 20,000.

The city management profession has also been hindered by a lack of scholarly research and the limited development of tailored curriculum. This has impeded discovery of which knowledge, skills, and abilities he implements in his position with regularity. With no clear indication of what current city managers in smaller municipalities value as most important professionally, it is difficult to discern their perceptions. Learning or gaining insight regarding their attitudes and perceptions may provide invaluable information about the profession previously unknown.

To assist in improving educational and development needs, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), have been working together. These two organizations share the primary purpose of preparing future public service managers, including city managers, through education and training. This priority is reflected within the purpose statement of their partnership, named the Local Government Management Education Committee. It states that, "Administrators, even in small communities, must demonstrate a range of capabilities and master a diversity of relationships found only among the few most highly placed administrators at other levels of government (NASPAA 2005).

Professional education and preparation for city managers in smaller municipalities is critical. As previously mentioned, a principal organization responsible for preparation of current and future city managers through peer review and accreditation is NASPAA. NASPAA is in charge of accrediting master's degree programs in public affairs,

administration, and policy on the collegiate level (NASPAA 2005). This is important

because many current city managers have earned degrees in these fields of study[4].

NASPAA has developed specific guidelines and standards for accreditation. One

NASPAA accreditation standard deals with the common curriculum components for

graduate education[5]. These components are, "designed to produce professionals capable

of intelligent, creative analysis and communication, and action in public service

(NASPAA 2005)." The components are not only used for accreditation, but to help guide

public servants and leaders. Therefore, many city managers are beholden to NASPAA

and its common curriculum components as a tool for further development of their

knowledge, skills, and abilities.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the degree of importance current city

managers place on their knowledge, skills, and abilities using the common curriculum

components for professional degree education of the National Association of Schools of

Public Affairs and Administration. The common curriculum components are used as the

framework for describing city manager perceptions.

Benefits of Research

The research could help in a few ways. First, as over 80 million baby boomers

(born between 1946 and 1964) retire, there are only 50 million Generation Xers (1965-

1977) available to fill their vacated positions (Benest 2005). The impact will be greatest

in the public sector, which has more baby boomers than the private. The city

management profession is no exception. A study completed by Buckwalter and Parsons

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[4] See Renner citation on page 5.

[5] The standards can be found at http://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/seeking/reference/standards.asp

on local city manager career paths expanded on this area. They found that out of 313 city managers surveyed, 79 percent were age 40 and up (Buckwalter and Parsons 2000). This shows the city management profession is dominated by experienced administrators, shying away from younger, less experienced candidates.

Second, over 60 percent of all city managers have an MPA, MBA, or other advanced graduate degree (Renner 2001). Other studies on city management have focused on demographics, gender, age, and characteristics of city managers. No current study exists on what city managers believe the most important competencies are for city management. The perceptions of city manager knowledge, skills, and abilities can greatly influence and prepare interested persons as well as programs that train city managers for careers in this field.

And third, professional educational institutions can use the data to further develop curricula for students interested in city management and administration. NASPAA's objective is to ensure quality education and development of future professional leaders and students (NASPAA 2005). It is vital that NASPAA accreditation standards are in line with the requirements of the city management profession. Not all MPA graduates will pursue careers in city management or even the public sector. But the size of government is increasing, especially on the local level. This growth along with baby boomer retirement will leave many future opportunities for employment. Educational institutions like NASPAA have a responsibility to prepare graduate students for this inevitability. It is important the curriculum taught reflects the knowledge, skills, and abilities present city managers employ with regularity.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter two provides an overview of the National Association of Schools of
Public Affairs and Administration's function, standards, and common curriculum
components used for evaluating and accrediting masters' degree programs. Chapter three
is the literature review on city management. Here, the descriptive categories created are
discussed and tied to the literature. The methodology used, survey questionnaire,
statistical analysis, and population are explored in Chapter four. Chapter five examines
the data and results from the survey. The final chapter, Chapter six, summarize the
findings and makes recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: NASPAA Standards

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the accreditation process and standards for the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration. Specifically, the common curriculum components used in the accreditation process are introduced. This chapter sets the stage for Chapter three, the review of city management literature.

Background

The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) is an association of professional graduate programs in public administration, public policy, and public affairs. Founded in 1970, this institution currently comprises membership of 253 U.S university programs in the aforementioned fields (NASPAA 2003). Their mission is to promote public service and make certain education and training is first-rate for students, educators, professionals, and practitioners (NASPAA 2005).

The accrediting arm for masters degree programs of NASPAA is the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA). COPRA is specialized and allows member institutions and universities to seek professional accreditation through site visits and peer reviews (NASPAA 2005). Upon completion, the information from reviewers and the results are posted on the NASPAA home website.

Specific standards were developed by NASPAA and COPRA for professional master's degree education to measure university programs in public affairs, administration, and policy. All versions of the masters degree seeking program for accreditation or re-accreditation are covered by these standards (NASPAA 2005). Therefore, institutions pursuing accreditation of their program must demonstrate how they meet all standards, not simply a majority.

One of the exclusive guidelines concerns standard 4.0, Curriculum[6]. This section details curriculum guidelines for purpose of professionally preparing students through education for leadership in public service (NASPAA 2003). NASPAA and COPRA identified and designed a broad curriculum to meet and emphasize general competencies for current students and future administrators. The components are primarily intended for graduate students and must be consistent with the program mission (NASPAA 2005).

Section 4.21, titled Common Curriculum Components, explicitly document the requirements for graduate education for master's degree programs. NASPAA (2005) states that, "The common curriculum components shall enhance the student's values, knowledge, and skills to act ethically and effectively." This purpose seeks to influence the knowledge, skills, and abilities of students by providing universities and professors core components for teaching and implementing curriculum. **Table 2.1** identifies the three distinct curriculum component categories and their coinciding components of NASPAA common curriculum components for master's degree education to accomplish professional preparation of students.

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[6] The common curriculum components can be accessed at the following link:
http://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/seeking/reference//standards.asp

Table 2.1: NASPAA Common Curriculum Components

Standards	Components
Management of Public Service Organizations	o Human Resources o Budgeting and Financial Processes o Information Management o Technology Applications o Policy
Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis	o Policy and Program Formulation o Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation o Decision making o Problem Solving
Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment	o Political and Legal Institutions and Processes o Economic and Social Institutions and Processes o Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior

Chapter Summary

This chapter highlights the purpose of NASPAA and its standards for accrediting masters degree programs, particularly the common curriculum components for professional masters degree programs. NASPAA plays a crucial role in development of curriculum and standards for graduate degree programs in public affairs, administration, and policy. The next chapter includes a history of the city management profession and uses the common curriculum components to describe city manager knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Chapter Purpose

There are two purposes for this chapter. First, the history and current state of the city manager profession is explored. Second, this chapter focuses on the scholarly literature of city managers using the NASPAA common curriculum components. This is critical for ascertaining perceptions of what city managers value as the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities. The descriptive categories are formulated and connected to the larger scholarly literature in this chapter.

History

Originally, the city manager position and the council-manager form of government were adopted to eradicate corruption and inefficiency in local governments (Pelissero 2003). Many municipalities were controlled by political machines, like Tammany Hall in New York City (Golembiewski and Gabris 1994). These political machines wielded enormous power over local governments and their employees through such means as bribes, threats, and intimidation. Bosses who controlled these machines dispensed jobs, contracts, and public goods and services only to those supporting their leadership. But during this period, the seeds of the city management profession were taking hold. A variety of forces such as the rise of urbanization, the popularity of business and corporate principles, the Progressive reform movement, and the scientific management and public administration movements were beginning to reshape the municipal landscape (Stillman 1974).

This period of decadence led to the founding of the National Municipal League in 1885 to make structural changes in city governments to eliminate corruption. Subsequently, the first city manager was appointed in 1908 in Staunton, Virginia (Montjoy and Watson 2002). Four years later, Sumter, South Carolina became the first city to fully adopt the council-manager plan (Pelissero 2003). Richard S. Childs, a Progressive reformer long considered the father and inventor of the city manager and council-manager plan, was the primary advocate for this type of government (Bollens 1969). Inspired by the city of Sumter experience, he worked tirelessly to create and promote his vision of local government. His efforts succeeded. By 1915, the National Municipal League adopted his plan, bringing it national attention and appeal (Stillman 1974). This was the tipping point. Soon after Sumter, Dayton, Ohio became the first major city with a large population to employ a city manager (East 1965). The profession slowly penetrated American cities, deftly gaining momentum with each new adoption.

In the early 20th Century, most city managers were educated and trained in the field of civil engineering and planning. A study by Richard Nolting in 1934 found that over 77 percent of city managers had engineering degrees from college (Renner 2001). This reflects the structural infancy of most cities and their need for a professional to manage population growth with providing public services. These early city managers also embodied the role characteristic of managing as a neutral expert—implementing policy rather than creating it (Montjoy and Watson 2002; Nalbandian 1991). This is referred to as the politics-administration dichotomy and is largely associated with the writings of Woodrow Wilson and Frank Goodnow (Svara 1998). The dichotomy states that politics and administration should be separate entities in government management.

The purpose was to allow city managers to operate without compromising their professional integrity, ethics, and values. Even the International City/County Management Association's (ICMA) Code of Ethics in 1924 and 1938 explicitly stated that city managers were not policy-makers (Svara 1998).

By the 1950s-60s, his role began to shift away from the dichotomy. As the occupation became more professionalized and common, he spent less time remaining neutral and more on management and policy affairs. In 1965, Deil S. Wright conducted a survey on role perceptions of city managers.   The respondent's perceptions were: 37 percent of time spent on management role (staffing, budgeting, and supervision), 22 percent on policy role (policy initiation and formulation), and 33 percent on the political (relations with nongovernmental and governmental persons) (Newell and Ammons 1987). In a companion study using the same categories conducted by Newell and Ammons in 1985, the results indicated a change in perceptions. Now, he placed more emphasis on policy role (55.8 percent versus 22 percent), political role (5.8 percent versus 33 percent), and management role (38.5 percent versus 37 percent) (Newell and Ammons 1987). In twenty years, his perceived role sharply changed in two of the three categories. The data indicates that city managers believe they are more responsible for policymaking and formulation, not simply policy implementation and advice.

Current State of the Profession

The current state of the city manager profession has further progressed. It has evolved from a career composed of technical specialists to one of policy generalists (Renner 2001). Svara (1999) adds to this by noting that most city managers have always

been leaders in policy, offering more than just technical advice to the city council and elected officials. Their tenure, education level, and authority have steadily increased, permitting a more formal relationship with the elected officials they serve.

Most city managers currently serve in small communities. Here, intricacies of professional management are learned, presenting the prospect of relocating to municipalities of greater population and responsibility. Svara (1999) surveyed city managers and found of the respondents, 55 percent came from another city and 51 percent either held the position of city manager or assistant city manager. Renner (2001) found that of the 61 percent of city managers responding they left their previous manager position voluntarily, a majority indicated the reason was for career advancement. The survey results are reinforced by a study conducted in 2002. Of 419 city manager respondents who gave reasons for leaving their previous post, 73 percent cited professional advancement as the cause (Buckwalter and Parsons 2002). The studies show how these beginnings are generally prerequisites for career mobility.

Reason for Study

The changes to the city manager profession since conception have been extensive. As new communities emerge and existing ones continue to expand, his role will continue to change and increase in its value and importance. This reality establishes a need for scholars, academics, practitioners, and students to better understand the knowledge, skills, and abilities he believes are the most important for the profession.

Many current city managers have earned a graduate degree in public affairs, administration, or management. Generally, these institutions of higher education are

accredited or seek accreditation from NASPAA (NASPAA 2002). It is crucial to realize

whether the standards used for accreditation match city manager perceptions of what are

the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities are in their professional role. This

paper explores the relationship, if any exists, between the curriculum standards identified

by NASPAA and COPRA and the perceptions by city managers of the standards.

NASPAA, the accrediting body for professional degree programs, identifies three

broad categories of curriculum necessary for educational development and professional

public service. The categories are management of public service organizations,

application of quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis, and understanding of

the public policy and organizational environment[7]. Standards for curriculum can be

found in Section 4.0 titled Curriculum by the following link,

http://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/seeking/reference/standards.asp.

To ascertain which knowledge, skills, and abilities of current city managers are

most important, the National Association for Schools of Public Affairs and

Administration common curriculum components for professional degree programs

primarily for graduate students, plus a section on administrative ethics and skills set, will

be used as the foundation. These components stress educational areas students and future

administrators must possess to become quality public servants and managers.

The next section of this chapter discusses city managers using the NASPAA

common curriculum components for masters degree programs as a framework.

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[7] Concerns have been raised over the generality of the NASPAA curriculum standards. They are broad and allow for ambiguity because of the vagueness of the curriculum components and lack of clarification of the terms identified and used for accreditation.

Management of Public Service Organizations

City managers have the awesome responsibility of operating the administrative tasks of a municipality. NASPAA (2005) standards of accreditation identifies four subtopics universal to curriculum for knowledge pertaining to management of public service organizations; human resources, budgeting and financial processes, information management and technology applications, and policy. Human resources pertain to training, hiring and firing, and employee development. Budgeting and financial processes reviews the authority and responsibility he has over the budget process. The component of information management and technology applications speaks to the uses of technology, like the Internet and computer mapping software, and its impact on his profession. Finally, policy and its impact on council-manager relations is also discussed.

Human Resources

Human resources are a factor in managing for a city manager. Human resource managers or directors report to him on status of personnel, training, and employment issues. NASPAA states that local government managers should be concerned with the motivation, development, and recognition of all local government employees (NASPAA 1992). The city manager is responsible for overall maintenance of local government. In a 1997 survey, one of the key implications for experienced administrators discovered was that managers must play a positive role in encouraging the development of employees (Crewson and Fisher 1997). She relies heavily on employees to carry out policies and procedures created for the local government workforce. Depending on size and population, city managers are at the mercy of department heads, elected officials, and the

community (Mitchell 1991). Failure to actively retain and recruit valuable, productive employees can negatively impact her job approval, initiatives, and tenure.

Fostering these components amongst the workforce can lead to lower employee turnover, higher job satisfaction, and increased education and skills. This has not always been the immediate concern. Previous perceptions and studies found city managers focused heavily on issues of economy and efficiency (Kirlin 1996). Managers were viewed as separate from elected officials, unable to assist in policy development. In their new role, city managers are seen as leaders of the community through developing, infusing, and implementing values in city organizations (Golembiewski and Gabris 1994).

He must also create and maintain, at minimum, adequate training for local government employees and themselves. In many municipalities, city managers and employees are the first point of contact with the populous. A 1989 survey sent to 500 randomly selected city managers and mayors reinforced this perception. The data from the respondents indicated the local government administrators are concerned with training issues that extend further than the conventional knowledge, skills, and abilities current public administration managers occupy (Slack 1990). This is particularly relevant concerning newer inventions and fields in the areas of public works, telecommunications, information technology, human resource management, and financing (Slack 1990). City managers must focus on continued training and assistance. As their occupation continues to evolve, they incorporate more responsibilities like clarifying local values, creating constructive dialogue, and acquiring more professional skills (Golembiewski and Gabris 1994). Insufficient training programs and support can set back this structural progress.

For many municipalities, a city manager is often responsible for the hiring, or appointing, and firing of local administrators. One of his most critical responsibilities is to select department heads and other essential staff members (Hassett and Watson 2002). A 1996 survey developed and distributed by the ICMA found more than 80 percent of local government managers reported making all staff assignments and directing all the administrative activities of the organization (DeSantis 1998). He must generally seek approval from city council and / or the mayor before the hiring or appointment is permitted. Most common appointments or hiring involve police and fire chiefs (DeSantis 1998).   To maintain credibility, he must be able to acutely assess a person's work experience, background, education, and skills. Inaccurate appraisal of a person's abilities can negatively impact a city department and reflect poorly on his judgment. To maintain professional credibility, he must be able to hire qualified personnel and be prepared to dismiss those unable to perform.

Budgeting and Financial Processes

Budget and finance are considered the primary responsibilities of a city manager, largely because she, and a vast majority of others, is required to prepare the city budget for council approval. Municipalities routinely employ chief financial officers or managers for local budgetary work. But, the chief finance position requires reporting to the city manager and / or the council frequently on the state of the local economic infrastructure.

In a 1999 study conducted by the ICMA (International City/County Management Association), 95 percent of city managers responded that they are solely responsible for

developing and proposing the executive budget and 80 percent stated they exclusively

administered the budget after approval (Svara 1999). Another study in 1999 comparing

male and female city manager perceptions of their most important responsibilities echoed

this sentiment. It found that 64.6 percent of males and 61.4 percent of females ranked

fiscal responsibilities and knowledge their most necessary responsibility (Fox and

Schuhmann 1999). Surprisingly, in a 2005 study, the city managers surveyed asserted

that 35.5 percent of them develop the budget unilaterally and send it to elected officials

(DeSantis 1998). This formal authority and autonomy affords great levels of control and

latitude over funding levels of departments and aggregate citywide spending.

The autonomy over budgeting and finance has led to some apprehension. In a

1995 study on the future of city management, the authors suggest that city managers

move toward effectiveness over efficiency, thereby increasing focus on quality and

customer service rather than budget minutiae (Golembiewski and Gabris 1995). This is

to avoid myopic concentration on the fiscal environment of the city, which is not always

under internal control. External sources also play a large role in city governance. City

budgets are constrained by state and federal budgets and actions, such as state and federal

governments raising revenues (Koenig and Kise 1996). This can influence and change

the amount of money a city or municipality will have or receive. Therefore, city

managers should possess strong knowledge of budget and financial operations.

Information Management and Technology Applications

Information management represents an organizational and management solution,

based on information technology and software, to a challenge presented by the

environment (Laudon 2004). This area of knowledge is one of the most contemporary

issues for a city manager because of the recent influence of computers and information

technology (IT) in most work environments. Similar to the chief financial officer, IT

divisions operate under a director, commonly referred to as chief information officer

(CIO). The CIO is also responsible to him and subject to his authority. In a 1996

conference on city manager perceptions of future management, information technology

was selected as the number one change affecting city manager roles (Parrish and Frisby

1997).

Record keeping and retention exemplify the need for knowledge of information

management by city managers. City managers and administrators are consistently

besieged with questions and demands. Because of laws like the Freedom of Information

Act, the public is able to request and view any non-exempt public documents. A public

information management system should emphasize functions such as scrutiny by the

mass media, directions during crisis, and general public scrutiny regarding strict

accountability mechanisms (Newcomer and Caudle 1991). Maintaining all current and

necessary government documents is crucial for retaining trust and credibility with the

public. Failure to accurately maintain records can create negative publicity, community

strife, and the perception of corruption by appearing to withhold public information.

Another essential topic in information management is geographic information

systems (GIS). GIS is a technology that permits governments to capture, manage,

analyze, and use land-related data to solve complex planning and management problems

(Brown 1998). Simply, the program contains massive computer mapping capabilities.

Geographic information systems help city managers and local governments enhance

management knowledge by providing detailed information on property, development, infrastructure, and health and crime data (Ventura 1995). Information derived allows him and department heads to better manage and allocate resources through letting users examine local or entire parts of the community. Therefore, if violent crime dramatically increases or if an administrator desires to view recent local development trends, this software can display precise locations and demographics where these instances are occurring. Knowledge of information management by city managers should enable them to better protect the community and efficiently deliver goods and services to the public.

In the public sector, computers and information technology are used to develop, present, communicate, and spread information quickly and efficiently via the Internet. This is commonly referred to as E-government (Moon 2002). The importance to city management cannot be understated. Communication and partnerships with elected officials, outside groups, and individual citizens are increasingly more critical for city managers (Nalbandian 1999). E-government makes information available instantaneously and is readily accessible to many people, providing greater opportunity for input from citizens and elected officials. Because of the enormous responsibility she possesses, her schedule is limited for personal interaction with the community, such as town hall meetings. A knowledgeable understanding of IT and their applications could help city managers be more productive by allowing more time to be spent on city business.

City managers must also strengthen their knowledge in the use of technology applications. Electronic commerce, commonly known as e-commerce, represents one of these applications. E-commerce is the process of buying and selling goods and services

electronically using the Internet and other digital technologies (Laudon 2004). Many

localities and public sector agencies have presently adopted using computers to deliver

legal, social, and health services to the public (Milward and Snyder 1996). Municipal

governments, for example, can use e-commerce to allow electric and water utility

customers to pay their bills online, easier procurement of city supplies by employees, and

obtaining residential or commercial building permits. A 2000 study by the ICMA found

that while 96 percent of surveyed governments reported having city web pages, only 9

percent had e-commerce capabilities (O'Looney 2001). One of the primary reasons for

this restricted development may be public managers' inability to understand the

importance of these technologies and services (O'Looney 2001). Therefore, city

managers should be familiar with e-commerce and how they can apply it to their own

community.

City managers are considered more proactive in the use of computers and IT in

the public sector than other actors. Introducing technological improvements is easier

because they tend to value innovation more than elected officials, whose political values

hold them accountable to the public (Moon 2002). Future city managers should become

accustomed with computer technology and its implications. These new technologies and

their applications may improve work processes and delivery of goods and services.

Policy

Public policy refers to the decisions made by governments and the courses of

action chosen by government officials to solve perceived problems (LeMay 2002). Any

city manager should have a clear knowledge of policy pertaining to their local

government environment. Today, she spends more time in her position working with local power brokers and occupying policy-making roles (Golembiewski and Gabris 1994). Policy knowledge signifies a shift in roles from his administrative origin. The process, actors, and laws all influence how he manages community and employee affairs.

The current role of city managers requires them to work closely with elected officials on policy matters (Hassett and Watson 2002). This concept runs contrary to previous conceptions of city manager responsibilities. Historically, city managers were administrators, leaving policy for elected officials (Svara 1998); (Golembiewski and Gabris 1994). Increased professionalism and education has changed this characteristic. Now, city managers have integrated policy roles with the analytical, politically neutral disposition of their profession (Nalbandian 2001).

This close working relationship has not come without problems. As he has become more professionalized, so have city councils. Councils have become more hands on in local government management, sometimes leading to conflict and difficult work environments (Benest 2005). Data from a 1999 survey shows this can be difficult to navigate. The study found that city manager turnover is directly linked to problems with relationships between elected officials (Svara 1999). Most city councils have the singular authority to appoint and terminate employment of the city manager. This new relationship can affect the policy process of current and future city managers. If not careful, he could become beholden to the council, fearful of reprisal for opposing their issues.

Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis are tools and methods for helping city managers to decipher complex programs and public policy. City managers are more than high-level administrators and supervisors. Their role requires the knowledge and ability to understand, analyze, and apply public policy to city governance. The policy and program formulation stage requires early analysis of policy and perceived problems. Policy and program implementation and evaluation is used to address past, present, and future municipal matters and assess the results. Upon completion, decisions are made to determine the appropriate course of action and whether resources are available (decision-making). Decision-making leads to problem solving, which is the method of remedying visible and unforeseen obstacles through providing solutions. The following curriculum components are discussed below.

Policy and Program Formulation

The ability to formulate policies and programs is a current feature of the city management occupation. She has adopted the role of formulating policies and programs, a previous taboo. In a 1985 survey, city manager respondents stated that 32.2 percent of their time is spent on initiating and formulating policy compared to 22 percent twenty years earlier (Newell and Ammons 1987). This indicates that city managers involvement in the policy process has grown[8].

When deciding which policies and programs to develop, city managers not only rely on elected officials and community, but also use data and analysis for guidance.

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[8] A current study determining the degree of enhancement has either not been conducted or could not be located.

Basic descriptive statistics, as in the mean, median, and mode, along with advanced statistics, like multiple regression and t-tests, are commonplace in the public sector (Babbie 2004). Simple or complex city reports generally utilize statistical measures useful in the process of formulating policies and programs. A 1985 study found that city managers work an average of 56.5 hours a week (Newell and Ammons 1987). Time constraints create a need not only for competent staff and detailed summaries of reports, but the sole capability to comprehend the data presented.

One of the major dimensions of the city manager profession is that of a policy innovator, responsible for formulating ideas and visions and promoting and encouraging new projects in the community (Svara 1999). Her success, and sometimes employment, depends on serving the public competently. The inability to understand and apply general statistical methods can inhibit her professional aptitude. She should possess or acquire techniques and analytical skills to correctly inform the city council and public on local problems, future policies and programs, and long-term strategies.

Policy and program formulation also can cause role conflict between city managers and elected officials (Feiock and Stream 1998). Elected officials have primarily been the source of policy formulation. A city manager can give advice, not recommendations. The result has been a blurring of lines of authority. She and the city councils are not equivalent; councils can replace city managers at their discretion (Montjoy and Watson 2002). She should know when to follow and when to lead the council on issues of public policy.

Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation

Policy and program implementation and evaluation have long been considered a classical role of city managers. Historically, they were seen as chief implementers of the council's policies and programs regardless if they agreed on the substance. By 1969, the ICMA even stated that the city manager had a "direct responsibility" for policy making and implementation (Svara 1998). This degree of power allows for city managers to set and recommend the agenda and priorities for their municipality.

Implementation is crucial for a city managers job security. Since most are appointed, their tenure is tied directly to the council's appraisal of their performance. Failure to effectively implement council policies can lead to difficult local government relations or even termination (Svara 1999). The pressure is increased on city managers to act in accordance with council desires, even if they are in opposition.

Implementing policies also requires a clear understanding of the diverse community a local government organization serves (Rice 2004). City managers must understand local demographics to assess whom they are implementing the policies for and whom it will impact. Their values may not represent the majority of the population. The result could be decreased citizen support and communication. In a study on citizen perceptions on city managers, the authors found that listening to citizen problems can improve relationships, services, operations, and interaction with the public (Herzog and Claunch 1997).

City managers should also be leaders in municipal government policy and program evaluation. This may be accomplished by using a popular method known as the program evaluation and review technique (PERT). This is an analytical management tool

used to chart out a sequence of steps for carrying out a specific program (LeMay 2002).

Managers must display their leadership through formulating polices and urging the city

council for their approval (Svara 1998). City managers can implement this tool when

deliberating where resources should be delivered or to monitor work processes and time

schedules.

Decision-making

Techniques of operations research such as cost benefit analysis or cost

effectiveness analysis are partners in the local government decision-making process.

Policy and program assessments rely on precise, unbiased facts and figures. Besides

being the chief implementers of a municipality, city managers often function as the

central decision-maker. It is understood that current policy-makers and public

administrators often do not effectively use existing knowledge derived from scientific

research (Kirlin 1996). Decision-making refers to a city manager choosing a policy or

procedure that impacts the city, its employees, and the community (Montjoy and Watson

2002). Decisions can be from how to recognize outstanding employee performance to

the size and amount of tax abatements to encourage new business opportunities. City

managers should have a fundamental knowledge of research techniques and analysis in

order to make well-informed decisions.

City managers must have the ability to collect and analyze data when making

decisions. One way managers can analyze data is by performing a cost-benefit analysis.

This analysis simply weighs the cost, as in price, amount of time, and manpower, of

doing or not doing something versus what it could return in benefits (Babbie 2004). City

managers are repeatedly called upon to make tough decisions involving their community. They may have to choose between moderately repairing roads with heavy traffic or fixing roads in disrepair that have minimal traffic. Cost benefit analysis can provide accurate information about the impact of either choice, helping the city manager to decide between the options.

City managers can also use the survey method to assist in the decision making process. The survey method is a form of research that is mainly used to determine facts, beliefs, opinions, and perceptions from singular individuals (Babbie 2004). The most common methods used to collect data are questionnaires and interviews. Changes in communities and local demographics necessitate a change in the manner municipal government employees and administrators manage human and physical resources (Parrish and Frisby 1997). City managers can implement the survey method to determine the perception and beliefs of community leaders and citizens. Data derived from the respondents can lead to improvements in infrastructure, policies, programs, and communications. It is a valuable tool for city managers to know of and comprehend.

Problem-Solving

City managers are the principal problem solvers for a community. Problem solving requires the ability to identify, define, and produce a correct solution to a perceived problem (Geuras and Garofalo 2002). Most problematic situations often need more investigation and action before a resolution can be uncovered (Shields 2003). All steps must be taken or the problem may continue. It is necessary for city managers to

understand how to deal with problems and reach solutions in a complex, organizational environment.

One common technique the city manager can employ when solving problems is the case study method. The case study method is a qualitative, comprehensive examination of a single instance of a particular social phenomenon (Babbie 2004). He can utilize case studies when attempting to resolve local problems, like examining poverty growth, or implementing new programs, as in pay for performance for city employees. The data collected can be used for their community or for comparison to previous studies in other communities to determine any relationship, causality, or significance. This is especially true in the social sciences where the case study method has grown increasingly popular as a research tool (Yin 2003). He who understands the value and benefits of research can apply it to his municipality.

As citizens demand more public debate and participation in the policy process, they equally want to assist in solving community problems (Parrish and Frisby 1997). Increased public awareness of problems has forced city managers to be more proactive than reactive in problem solving. But, a proactive approach to problem solving using ideal solutions can discontinue public debate and place local government in an untenable position (Shields 2003). Nalbandian (1999) goes even further. He notes that local politics has also transformed the role of the city manager from that of a neutral expert to a community leader and a problem-solver as cited in Montjoy and Watson, 2002. Since city managers work in political environments and are usually appointed by the council, their responsibility to solve problems for the council has risen. Knowledge of this and

the local political landscape are essential to solving problems and maintaining trusting relationships within the city.

Conversely, as city managers have become power sharers with the council, areas of authority have become confusing (Nalbandian 1999). When problems develop, there can be role conflict over who should take the leadership position. A survey in 1997 found that one of a city manager's primary courses of action when problems arise is to protect the elected officials (Herzog and Claunch 1997). If this action is reciprocated is unclear. The relevance is that as the council-manager relationship gets murkier, she will likely receive the negative feedback. Problem-solving in a political environment means she should be physically and emotionally prepared to "fall on her sword" instead of shifting blame on the council.

Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment

A city manager operates in complex, ever-changing economic, political, and social climates. The third common curriculum category of NASPAA involves knowledge and understanding of the local, state, and federal government public policy and organizational environment. The political and legal landscape involves regulations, ordinances, party politics, and even community building, which can help or hinder a city manager's ability to operate. Economic and social institutions and processes also impact city business. Enterprise funds, economic development, social equity, and families and their issues are vital for a healthy local infrastructure. Organization and management concepts and behavior often preside over how city managers deal with municipal policies and employees.

Political and Legal Institutions and Processes

Political and legal institutions often influence and direct a city manager's role and level of authority in local government. Political institutions refer to the type of government (mayor-council, council-manager) and the actors involved (political affiliation). Legal institutions are the laws (federal, state, and local) that rule the government and the actors.

Though city managers are not political actors, they do operate in political environments (Hassett and Watson 2002). Managers must be sensitive to this fact. Elected officials have a constituency that holds them accountable through the electoral process, polling, and public opinion. Technologies such as e-mail, online web conferences, and the Internet better inform a community of public affairs and afford greater access to their representatives (Moon 2002). If policies proposed and implemented by the council receive negative feedback, the political ramifications may fall on the manager instead.

One area where a city manager can overcome political strife is through community building. Community building is a manager's ability to build political ties and relationships with elected officials among a diverse population with competing interests (Nalbandian 1999). The relationships these competing interests have with elected officials can be very powerful. In many circumstances, these interests represent issues the official ardently supports or they have helped by campaigning for their election.

The closeness of city managers to their local political actors is also a cause for concern. Historically this was separate. Presently, city managers must balance

competing interests and values, provide professional management, and remain fiscally tough (Golembiewski and Gabris 1994). Negotiating through political minefields is difficult for an individual not elected to office. In a 1994 study on city manager skill assessments, situation and political analysis was selected as the number one needed skill (Mitchell 1991).

He must also be cognizant of the legal institutions and laws that govern his locality. A 1996 study found four areas where the law influences a city managers role; intergovernmental relations, the legislature, regulatory agencies (i.e. EPA), and the courts (Koenig and Kise 1996). Regulatory agencies are largely viewed by city managers as the chief obstructionists in implementing city policies. Five city managers interviewed for this study in Illinois spoke of how the EPA's regulations on protecting wetlands from building sites limited available choices for the community (Koenig and Kise 1996). He must have the skills necessary to interpret complex laws while being familiar with the history of legal institutions and the impact on municipal policies and procedures.

Economic and Social Institutions and Processes

Another element of public policy and the organizational environment are the economic and social institutions that operate within. Understanding economic institutions includes such things as land use and development, housing, poverty, employment, transportation, and environmental protection (NASPAA 1992). Social institutions are ones that include concepts such as quality of life considerations, like mental and physical health, poverty, race and ethnic relations, age, housing, education,

leisure services, and economic opportunities (NASPAA 1992). Both institutions are commonplace in most cities and therefore common to most city managers.

City managers, despite size and composition of the city they oversee, must be familiar with local economic institutions. One such institution is an enterprise fund. Enterprise funds are government owned or supported agencies, departments, or organizations that set fees and charge for delivery of goods and services (Rubin 1988). They resemble private sector businesses because they are somewhat or entirely self-sustaining through the generation of revenue. Common enterprises are electric utilities, wastewater, and sanitation. Though these funds do generate revenue and allow for transfer of monies to the general fund, there is concern. A study in South Carolina stated that enterprise funds should not be defined by their type but by the amount of control the city manager and council have over their operations (Tyer 1989). She should not only be mindful of enterprise funds and their influence, but also their control mechanisms and administrators responsible for management and oversight.

Economic processes in local governments are also vastly relevant concerning city manager knowledge. For many municipalities, economic development is essential in creating a fiscally reliable and stable environment for citizens. A survey questionnaire distributed by the International City/County Management Association in 1999 found that 84 percent of reporting cities noted some economic growth from 1994 to 1999 and more than 90 percent expected some growth to persist (Milligan 2001). This trend has not subsided. This survey also concluded that local governments have actively pursued non-manufacturing businesses, primarily telecommunications and technology industries (Milligan 2001). Attracting new businesses to a community usually increases revenues

local governments can generate, most notably through the increase of people and property to the taxable population. These additional monies can increase the conveyance of necessary local services and assist in creating and implementing new ones for public consumption. Understanding and having knowledge of local economic development by city managers is crucial for encouraging this expansion.

City manager must contain knowledge of more than economic institutions and processes. Social institutions and processes are equally important because they concern the quality of life within the community. For example, a 2000 study by Renner had city managers identify the three most important factors citizens used to evaluate their quality of life within the community. The top two highest ranking choices were quality of schools, at 62 percent, and overall economic vitality, at 32 percent (Renner 2001). Both represent social institutions that members of the community rely on for health of their friends, family, children, and themselves. City managers must not only create a strong relationship with the council, but they must ground their authority in community values as well (Nalbandian 1994). If their values contrast, it could lead to distrust of their leadership.

Families are another example of social institutions in municipalities. City managers should have knowledge of the influence this institution and its members have on local issues and public affairs. Families are considered one of the initial "social networks" and institutions (Waite 2000). They share resources, socialize, consume goods and services, and connect to the larger community as a unit (Waite 2000).

Social processes can also impact the city management profession. Social institutions often coincide with social equity, which can determine how a government

delivers goods and responds to its citizens (Rice 2004). She should have knowledge of social equity and how to encourage it among the community. When government supplies the frameworks and institutions with which individuals, the private sector, and other non-public sector social factions can create value, governments can then produce a broader and more omnipresent value for society (Kirlin 1996). She has the responsibility to provide services for all citizens, not distinct sectors. Nalbandian adds that in the area of community building, citizens are obligated to expect government institutions to respect the values of representation, individual rights, and social equity so they (citizens) do not suffer from arbitrarily collective decisions (Nalbandian 1999). Ignoring social equity as a social process can interrupt local relations and communications. Therefore, she should own knowledge of this social process and respect voices and opinions the community, even in disagreement.

Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior

City managers are responsible for the health and maintenance of a municipality. Organization management concepts and behavior are extremely useful for city managers because of the scope of their administrative responsibilities. They require a clear knowledge of government structure, internal and external groups, communication, feedback, and methods of handling employee behavior (LeMay 2002).

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a relatively contemporary organizational and management concept in public administration. TQM is defined as a management approach whose principal tenets are to fulfill customer needs through comprehensive strategies of employee empowerment and measurement (Berman and West 1995). A

study in 1995 reviewed the level implementation of Total Quality Management in municipalities with populations over 25,000 through surveying city managers and chief administrative officers. The result has been mixed. While over 11 percent of cities had great commitment to TQM, 40 percent of city managers reported that it was "too early to tell" what the results were from their efforts (Berman and West 1995)[9]. A search for a follow up study or more recent information could not be found.

Strategic planning is another management concept a city manager should comprehend and appreciate. Strategic planning simplifies the decision-making process by assessing current agency situations and developing strategies and tactics for the future (LeMay 2002). Many city managers publish strategic plans in their proposed and approved budgets. This is not without its problems. Strategic planning is usually limited in its scope because it focuses on single departments instead of the entire organization, is not broadly participative, and there is no shared involvement (Golembiewski and Gabris 1995). It is up to her to decide on the vision for a city. Developing the strategic plan arbitrarily can alienate council members, but being more inclusive and allowing greater input could affect the proposed policies substance. She must be familiar with this dilemma before formulating a strategic plan.

Also, she must understand concepts for managing in multicultural, diverse environments. As of 2001, 88 percent of city managers were male, 95 percent were Caucasian, and the average tenure in the same location was 6.9 years (Renner 2001). These are moderate improvements in diversity from previous years. Even educational curriculum for Masters' degree programs is lagging. In a 2002 study examining the top

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[9] A current study determining additional Total Quality Management impact for city managers has either not been conducted or could not be located.

fifty Master of Public Administration (MPA) graduate programs, only twenty-six courses taught out of 1,222 total courses involved race or multiculturalism (White 2004). That equals only 2.13 percent. Thirty-nine of the fifty MPA programs prescribed no race-related programs at all (White 2004). The impact is past and present city managers, in many cases, have incomplete knowledge of managing in diverse environments.

Population size also affects managing a city. A 1995 International City/County Management Association survey found that 83 percent of municipal administrators work in municipalities of populations less than 25,000 (Crewson and Fisher 1997). Most city managers work in smaller communities where they moved for employment. NASPAA common curriculum components do not specify certain education or training requirements for future city managers in predominantly rural communities. The joint ICMA/NASPAA Task Force on Local Government Management Education touches on this subject by mentioning city managers should be familiar with urban sociology and history, demographics, intergroup relations, and local power structures (NASPAA 1992). Neither mentions how to manage successfully in this environment. Therefore, he must be prepared for on-the-job learning or furthering his education in rural economics and management.

Administrative Ethics

City managers must understand administrative ethics and have the ability to apply it to their management. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the common curriculum components are designed to promote ethical actions and behavior for future public servants and leaders (NASPAA 2002). A 1992 joint NASPAA/ICMA Task Force on Local

Government Management Education corresponds to the standards. It notes that because city managers work in close proximity with citizens, elected officials, and special interests, they are subject to ethical issues and dilemmas (NASPAA 2003)[10]. Ethics is a cornerstone of city management and impacts the administrative environment. Ethical dilemmas are ambiguous situations where choices and decisions have no clear right or wrong. Application of ethics deals with the way ethical decisions are applied to local governance. How city managers approach and handle ethics in the workplace can dictate their relationship with the staff, employees, and community.

Ethical Dilemmas

City managers should be aware of how to deal with ethical dilemmas in the workplace. Ethical dilemmas "consist of conflicts between a right and a right," differing from moral or value dilemmas (Geuras and Garofalo 2002, 146). Ethical dilemmas are part of the territory in the working life of an administrator. Any professional job must be based on a code of ethics (Hassett and Watson 2002).

In a 1997 study on ethics in government, 97 percent of all managers responded that they have encountered ethical dilemmas in the workplace (Bowman and Williams 1997). Renner also found maintaining high ethical standards for public managers are still one of the top principles for local government managers (Renner 2001). She must learn to mediate competing interests without compromising their values and city policies and

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[10] "Administrative Ethics – Ethical problems are not unique to local government, but the local government leader operates in unusually close proximity to constituents, and as a result, is subject to special political and ethical pressures. Local government managers need to know how to apply the ethical values emphasized in the NASPAA curriculum…" Located in the 1992 ICMA / NASPAA Task Force on Local Government Management Education.

procedures. Having and maintaining integrity in personal and professional relationships

may remove ethical dilemmas before they materialize (ICMA 2004).

Most ethical dilemmas do not involve stealing public funds or violating the law.

More challenging ethical situations arise when managers must carry out a vague law,

balancing public interest groups, sorting out organizational interests from organizational

ego, or not abandoning personal values (Wart 1996). These are more difficult to navigate

because there is no illegality or perception of impropriety among the actors and manager.

Application of Ethics

Knowledge of ethics is not the endgame. How a city manager applies ethics and

ethical values in the workplace is noteworthy. He sets the behavioral example for the city

and employees. A survey of public managers (including city managers) in 1996 found

that 58 percent of managers believe most agencies employ no consistent approach to

ethics in an organization (Bowman and Williams 1997). The importance is that upper

management must set the standard for ethical behavior within an organization (Bowman

and Williams 1997).

The issue also impacts graduate students and future city managers. Applying

ethics to behavior in organizations is particularly important for MPA students desiring a

career in city management because they are less likely to have had significant work-

related experience to draw from (Jurkiewicz and Giacalone 2002). Education usually

provides the first encounter of ethical issues for many of these prospective administrators.

Of accredited and non accredited MPA programs offered by member institutions of

NASPAA, only 23 percent include mandatory ethics education in their curriculum

(Jurkiewicz and Giacalone 2002). Simply having a code of ethics is not the solution. If many future city managers never receive substantive background information on ethics through graduate or undergraduate curriculum, how can they be expected to apply ethics to the organization?

Problems in applying ethics can also mature. A 1996 survey on ethics in government discovered that 25 percent of administrators who did not find the American Society of Public Administrators (ASPA) Code of Ethics helpful said they would use their own values, philosophy, common sense, and feelings to do what they thought was right (Bowman and Williams 1997). Though the study doesn't refer directly to city managers, they were included in the survey. Subjectively applying personal ethics to city business is a serious ethical violation. Individuals would be unaware if they committed an ethical breach if only the city manager knew the ethical guidelines. City managers should be able to apply ethics to local government without arbitrarily using only their values for the foundation.

Skill Set

When presiding over city affairs, city managers must know more than public sector budgeting and political and legal processes to truly manage a municipality. NASPAA standards state that, "curriculum components are designed to produce professionals capable of intelligent, creative analysis and communication, and action in public service (NASPAA 2005)." Today and in the future, city managers need an increased set of skills to meet the publics' demand for services (Gooden 1998). The skills set of writing, public speaking, and bargaining and negotiation are imperative for

communicating with the numerous and varied citizens, local elected officials, business, and interest groups. A lack of these intangibles can disrupt a city managers ability to positively manage a municipality.

Writing

Written communication is a skill current city managers should possess. City managers are often required to produce the local budget, create and implement new policies, communicate clearly with elected officials and employees, and promote their vision to the masses. A conference in 1996 found that the number one issue confronting managers of the future is effective communication and presentation of thoughts and ideas (Parrish and Frisby 1996). These responsibilities, among many more, require the ability to produce high-level, professional writing.

Writing, or written communication, is essential for a city manager. City managers must be able to plainly articulate local government ideas, programs, and goals. Time limitations and hectic schedules create a need of producing coherent documents and messages. Writing within public sector organizations, agencies, and departments is commonly a required, goal-oriented exercise for disseminating information, making decisions, and increasing knowledge of the readers (Suchan 1998). The joint ICMA / NASPAA taskforce on local government management in 1992 reaffirmed this role. It notes managers should be able to fully inform the media and public on local government agendas and initiatives (NASPAA 2003). The ability to execute this form of communication can work to enhance a city managers skill and ability to speak directly and decisively with constituents and politicians.

Public Speaking

Public speaking is another form of communication. Though city managers are not considered focal points of local government, their profession, role, and amount of power has become more recognizable by citizens and the media. This has forced city managers into the public eye. In many communities, they are no longer seen as bureaucrats, but as high-ranking officials on the same level as local politicians.

The ability of public speaking is a strong asset for any city manager to hold. She must be capable and prepared to clearly communicate ideas, facts, and current matters. A city manager or chief administrator routinely has interactions with the mayor and council (Svara 1999). She is required and routinely called upon to address the mayor and city council on the current state of the city. Most notable are hearings on the city budget. Also, she is often seen as the figurehead of the community, responsible for representing the city in ceremonial duties (Buckwalter and Parsons 2000). Examples could be the opening of a new forensic science building or introducing a new program.

Another reason the ability of public speaking is vital for a city manager involves the city council. One of the primary responsibilities of the city council's supervisory role is to regularly evaluate the job performance of the city manager (Wheeland 2002). His employment is conditional to the council's satisfaction. A city manager is not only the chief administrator, but he serves as an adviser to elected officials (Svara 1999). The inability to plainly communicate orally to the council and mayor on varieties of local government and community issues could jeopardize or strain their previously harmonious coexistence.

Bargaining and Negotiating

As the virtual CEO of a city, city managers handle a multitude of duties and responsibilities. A successful manager is a strong negotiator who works at shaping agreement and understanding through a complex network of relationships in an organization (Gooden 1998). This requires the skill and ability to bargain and negotiate with elected officials, unions, private and special interests, and citizens. Bargaining and negotiation is the process of communicating to reach agreement with another party where some interests are shared and others are opposed (Ury 1991). City managers are often involved in this process, if not the leader or arbiter.

City managers should have the skill to collectively bargain within their municipality. Collective bargaining is bargaining by a union or association on behalf of a group of employees (LeMay 2002). The most common of local bargaining efforts usually involve police and public works departments at the bare minimum. In a 1999 survey on labor-management relations, the International City/County Management Association found that the chief administrative officer (city manager) was the chief negotiator in collective bargaining agreements by the highest percentage of jurisdictions that responded (Hebdon 2000). This same survey also uncovered that 75 percent of respondents have employees in their jurisdiction who are members of either a union or association (Hebdon 2000). Whether all these employees who are union or association members collectively bargain is unclear. What is known is that city managers part in this process is considerable. Therefore, the skill to competently resolve and lead collective bargaining negotiations and agreements is critical for continuing city functions and employee relations.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research is descriptive categories. This study uses the NASPAA curriculum standards for accreditation as a framework to examine city manager perceptions. **Table 2.1** presents a summary of the categories and links it to the corresponding literature.

Table 2.1: NASPAA Components and City Manager Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Categories	Literature
Management of Public Service Organizations	
o Human Resources	o NASPAA 2003; Crewson and Fisher 1997; Mitchell 1991 o Kirlin 1996; Golembiewski and Gabris 1994; Slack 1990 o Golembiewski and Gabris 1994; o Hassett and Watson 2002; DeSantis 1998
o Budgeting and Financial Processes	o Svara 1999; Fox and Schuhmann 1999; DeSantis 1998 o Golembiewski and Gabris 1995; Koenig and Kise 1996
o Information Management and Technology Applications	o Laudon 2004; Newcomer and Caudle 1991 o Brown 1998; Ventura 1995; Moon 2002; Nalbandian 1999 o Milward and Snyder 1996; O'Looney 2001
o Policy	o LeMay 2002; Golembiewski and Gabris 1994 o Hassett and Watson 2002; Svara 1998 o Nalbandian 2001; Benest 2005; Svara 1999
Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis	
o Policy and Program Formulation	o Newell and Ammons 1987; Babbie 2004; Svara 1999 o Feiock and Stream 1998; Montjoy and Watson 2002
o Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation	o Svara 1998; Svara 1999; Rice 2004 o Herzog and Claunch 1997; LeMay 2002; Svara 1998
o Decision-making	o Kirlin 1996; Montjoy and Watson 2002 o Babbie 2004; Parrish and Frisby 1997
o Problem Solving	o Geuras and Garofalo 2002; Shields 2002; Babbie 2004 o Parrish and Frisby 1997; Montjoy and Watson 2002 o Yin 2003; Nalbandian 1999; Herzog and Claunch 1997
Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment	
o Political and Legal Institutions and Processes	o Hassett and Watson 2002; Moon 2002; Nalbandian 1999 o Golembiewski and Gabris 1994; Mitchell 1991 o Koenig and Kise 1996
o Economic and Social Institutions and Processes	o NASPAA 2003; Rubin 1988; Tyer 1989 o Miligan 2001; Renner 2001; Nalbandian 1994 o Waite 2000; Rice 2004; Kirlin 1996; Nalbandian 1999
o Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior	o LeMay 2002; Berman and West 1995 o Golembiewski and Gabris 1994; Renner 2001 o White 2004; Crewson and Fisher 1997; NASPAA 2003
Administrative Ethics	
o Ethical Dilemmas	o Geuras and Garofalo 2002; Hassett and Watson 2002 o Bowman and Williams 1997; Renner 2001; o ICMA 2004; Wart 1996
o Application of Ethics	o Jurkiewicz and Giacalone 2002 o Bowman and Williams 1997
Skill Set	
o Writing	o Parrish and Frisby 1997; Suchan 1998; NASPAA 2003
o Public Speaking	o Svara 1999; Buckwalter and Parsons 2000 o Wheeland 2002; Svara 1999
o Bargaining and Negotiating	o Gooden 1998; Ury 1991; LeMay 2002 o Hebdon 2000; Dilger 1997; Chandler and Feuille 1991

Chapter Summary

This chapter described current city managers knowledge, skills, and abilities through use of the NASPAA curriculum standards for accreditation. The conceptual framework linking the literature to the standards was developed and explained. The next chapter examines the research methodology applied to this study. This involves the collection of data and research tools employed.

Chapter 4: Methodology

<u>Chapter Purpose</u>

This chapter ties together the literature with the implemented study. The research describes what Texas city managers' in small municipalities value in their knowledge, skills, and abilities by using the NASPAA common curriculum components for professional master's degree programs for foundation. The research design and methodology for the study is also explained.

<u>Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework</u>

Five distinct descriptive categories were formed using the NASPAA guidelines. The five categories used are management of public service organizations, application of qualitative and quantitative techniques of analysis, understanding of the public policy and organizational environment, administrative ethics, and skill set. These categories were used to develop the survey questionnaire items. **Table 4.1** operationalizes the five categories and links the descriptive categories to the survey questionnaire.

Table 4.1: Operationalizing the Conceptual Framework of City Manager Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

Category	Subcategory	Survey Response
Management of Public Service Organizations*	1. Human Resources 2. Budgeting and Financial Processes 3. Information Management and Technology Applications 4. Policy	1. Little or No Importance 2. Seldom Important 3. Moderate Importance 4. Fairly Important 5. Very important
Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis**	1. Policy and Program Formulation 2. Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation 3. Decision-making 4. Problem Solving	1. Little or No Importance 2. Seldom Important 3. Moderate Importance 4. Fairly Important 5. Very important
Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment*	1. Political and Legal Institutions and Processes 2. Economic and Social Institutions and Processes 3. Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior	1. Little or No Importance 2. Seldom Important 3. Moderate Importance 4. Fairly Important 5. Very important
Administrative Ethics**	1. Ethical Dilemmas 2. Application of Ethics	1. Little or No Importance 2. Seldom Important 3. Moderate Importance 4. Fairly Important 5. Very important
Skill Set***	1. Writing 2. Public Speaking 3. Bargaining and Negotiating	1. Little or No Importance 2. Seldom Important 3. Moderate Importance 4. Fairly Important 5. Very important

All survey questions use the Likert scale and are identical in format for every category.
*As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of _____ in your role?
** As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the ability to _____ in your role?
*** As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the skill of _____ in your role?

Survey Research

Survey research is the methodology used for determining attitudes of Texas city managers in populations 25,000 or less regarding the value of NASPAA common curriculum components required for accreditation. The purpose of this paper is to describe current city manager perceptions of what the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities are for city management by using the NASPAA curriculum components. Surveys are considered excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientations of people in a large population (Babbie 2004).   Surveying allows for data collection from a segment of this current population. No study exists that examines these perceptions. Hence, learning directly from practitioners to gain further insight on their values and attitudes is crucial.

For survey research, questions will be developed and distributed via e-mail. The web site, www.surveymonkey.com, will be used for sending and receiving the surveys, plus compiling data from the respondents. Respondents will receive a link to this website through e-mail. Clicking on the link will take them to the website where they can answer the questions anonymously. The questions are tied to the subtopics of the conceptual framework and are supported by the literature.

Strengths of Survey Research

Survey research is a popular method of data collection among scholars, students, and professionals. It was chosen for its strengths. First, surveys are very useful when attempting to describe the characteristics of a large population (Babbie 2004). City managers are employed in dozens of small towns and cities across Texas with

populations of 25,000 or less. The Internet and e-mail allowed for these city managers to respond quickly to the questionnaire from anywhere.

Second, surveying allows for anonymity of the respondents. In this case, city managers surveyed were currently employed. Anonymity provides freedom to the city managers in answering questions that they may not normally want to publicly address. Some city managers may be apprehensive when noting what is most important in their roles for worry of harming council-manager relations or unintentionally implying that other areas are not as important. Keeping the surveys anonymous encourages these managers to provide accurate assessment of the NASPAA curriculum components without fear of reprisal.

Weaknesses of Survey Research

Survey research, however, is not perfect. Weaknesses are also prevalent in survey research. Standardized questions for survey research frequently consist of the "least common denominator" when attempting to discover characteristics about a set group of people (Babbie 2004). This means that questions designed for the masses are more general and less specific, possibly limiting the significance of the data. The NASPAA curriculum components used in this survey are general by design. A more refined and detailed sense of their meaning could reveal greater specificity. For example, budgeting and financial institutions and processes may be important, but some techniques or theories may have lesser or greater importance. The survey questionnaire is unable to assess these degrees of importance.

Second, surveys are also considered inflexible. Because surveys are classically meant to be unchanged throughout the study, even if the researcher discovers an important new question or variable, he or she would be unable to do anything about it (Babbie 2004). The comments solicited from city managers in the questionnaire illustrated other knowledge, skills, and abilities they perceived as important[11]. Though some of these areas were not found in researching the literature does not mean they are unimportant to the profession.

Population

The population for this research is currently employed Texas city managers in cities with populations of 25,000 or less. The Texas City Management Association (TCMA) maintains a current accessible roster of employed city managers on their website.   A search was conducted using their online database for all cities with city managers and that have populations under 25,000. Only city managers were searched for using the TCMA roster. Other titles similar to the city management profession, such as city or town administrator, were not used in this research. The resulting population totaled 187 cities matching this description. The number then narrowed to 171 cities contacted[12]. A deadline of three weeks was set for respondents to complete the survey.

As previously discussed, the population size includes current city managers employed in cities in the state of Texas with populations less than 25,000. A 1995 International City/County Management Association survey found that 83 percent of municipal administrators work in municipalities of populations less than 25,000

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[11] See Appendix D for comments by city managers from the survey.
[12] See Chapter 5, Results, under **Description of Returned Surveys** for more information.

(Crewson and Fisher 1997). Many a city manager has begun a career in smaller municipalities to gather experience and prepare for career advancement. Buckwalter and Parson's (2000) study reiterates this point. They found that 65 percent city managers and chief administrators surveyed follow the career path of entering the municipality as a department manager, gradually moving up to assistant manager and then manager. The size of communities often requires him to be proficient in many areas, not simply budgeting or management.

The survey along with a brief explanation of the research purpose was distributed using e-mail to all cities less than 25,000 from the TCMA roster. Two weeks later, a reminder e-mail informing the prospective respondents only one week remained to complete the survey was transmitted using the identical roster from the first e-mail.

Anonymity of Respondents

As previously discussed, the city managers surveyed for this paper are anonymous. The survey was purposely designed for identities to remain anonymous. This was done to ensure the quality of the responses. The website used for data collection was www.surveymonkey.com. From this website, a link to the survey was created and then attached to the e-mail sent to city managers requesting their participation. The city managers could open the link, answer the survey questions, and exit the survey anonymously[13]. Upon completion, the responses were recorded onto the

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[13] The website, www.surveymonkey.com, states the following: "Create Link for an Email Message—The fastest way to collect responses. Simply send a link to your survey in your own email message. The identities of respondents **will not be tracked**." This option was used in the design and creation of my survey. No personal information of respondents, such as names and / or e-mail addresses, is available when choosing this option.

website. The only information available about the respondents was the choices selected and the total number of respondents for each question.

Statistics

For purposes of this paper, descriptive statistics are employed. Response percentages of fairly important / very important and the mode are recorded. Also included is the ranking of the most important component for each category. These statistics and percentages will provide an overall impression of perceptions by city managers in Texas municipalities with populations 25,000 or less regarding their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Chapter Summary

In summary, the survey is used to ascertain which knowledge, skills, and abilities city managers recognize as the most important in their respective role. Additionally, general characteristics, such as age and education, are also considered. The subsequent Results chapter examines the data gathered from the survey and provides statistical analysis.

Chapter 5: Results

Chapter Purpose

This chapter examines the results from the city manager survey. As previously addressed, the purpose of this paper is to assess current city manager perceptions on what knowledge, skills, and abilities are most important in their role by using the common curriculum components for master's degree programs of NASPAA. The data is placed in tables and discussed by curriculum category. This includes an examination of which component is ranked most important for every category. General characteristics of the respondents are also described[14].

Description of Returned Surveys

From the population of 187 cities meeting the research criteria, 171 cities were sent the survey via e-mail[15]. A total of eighty-one responses were received, generating a response rate of approximately 47 percent. Since the response rate is below 50 percent, which Babbie (2004) notes is the minimum percentage sufficient for analysis, a higher chance for response bias exists. **Tables 5.1** through **5.5** provide modes and percentages from respondent answers to survey questions. Also included are the city manager rankings of the most important component for each category.

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[14] Tables for the General Characteristics are located in Appendix A.

[15] The cities of Port Lavaca, Portland, Hutto, Jersey Village, Colorado City, Gilmer, Lucas, Canyon, Eastland, Ferris, Poteet, Corinth, Albany, Groves, Aransas Pass, could not be contacted because their e-mail addresses from the TCMA roster were either no longer current or invalid. An Internet search for current contact information yielded either the same incorrect addresses from the TCMA roster or nothing for all above cities. One response received from the city manager of the City of Orange noted he had no time to respond because his area was heavily damaged from Hurricane Rita. This leaves 171 cities that received e-mail notification.

General Characteristics

Of the responses, 86 percent are male and 14 percent female, 83 percent are age forty or older, and 76 percent have served in the same city as manager for six years or less. This echoes a previously mentioned survey conducted by Renner (2001) through the ICMA which found that 88 percent of city managers were male and 12 percent female and their average tenure was nearly seven years in the same location. The responses correspond to the existing literature reviewed for this paper. The survey also requested the career length of the respondents as a city manager. Sixty-three percent responded that they have been a city manager for seven or more years. Forty-one percent of this group replied with 10 years or more.

Details about the respondents and cities are also used for reference. Eighty-five percent of city managers indicated their city population is 14,999 or less. Another question asked for the geographic region of Texas where their city is located. The result is that Central Texas (32 percent), North Texas (25 percent), and West Texas (16 percent), were the highest responses by location, with the South and East Texas regions least represented at 11 percent each.

The last area of the survey requiring information on personal characteristics concerns education. Respondents were asked to report the highest level of education achieved. Of this category, 53 percent reported having earned a graduate degree, followed by 20 percent reporting they are a college graduate. All respondents indicated that at minimum, they have completed high school. The least amount of education achieved is some college, which 8 percent reported. For the type of graduate degree earned, 51 percent of all managers, and 76 percent of those who reported earning a

graduate degree, possess an MPA. This also resembles the literature. Wheeland (1995) also found in a survey 829 city managers, 62 percent reported having earned an MPA.

Management of Public Service Organizations

Administration and management responsibilities are universal for city managers. **Table 5.1** summarizes the descriptive statistics for city manager perceptions of importance regarding NASPAA common curriculum components for professional graduate programs. The rank of most important component is also included[16].

Table 5.1: City Manager Value Perceptions of Management of Public Service Organizations

Survey Questions As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of:	N	% Fairly to Very Important	Mode	Rank % of Most Important
Human resources	81	96%	Very Important**	7%
Budgeting and financial processes	81	100%*	Very Important	72%
Information management and technology applications	81	68%	Fairly Important***	0%
Policy	80	99%	Very Important	21%

*No other choices selected for this question
**27 percent selected "Fairly Important"
***31 percent selected "Moderate Importance;" 48 percent selected "Fairly Important"

The aggregate indicate city managers value all aspects of management of public service organizations. The respondents valued the knowledge of budgeting and financial

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[16] The tables ranking most important component by category are located in Appendix B.

processes highest (100 percent). The high percentage mirrors a 1999 survey which found

that 95 percent of those respondents propose the executive budget (Svara 1999). Closely

followed is the knowledge of policy (99 percent) and human resources (96 percent). The

only distinct difference lies in the knowledge of information management and technology

applications (68 percent).

City and employee size may be the reason for the decreased value of importance

in this area. In **Table 5.1**, the respondents suggest that knowledge of budgeting and

financial processes, policy, and human resources is essential for effective management of

municipalities. Though information management and technology applications are

perceived as fairly important, it is 26 percent below the next closest element in the

category.

In category of management of public service organizations, 72 percent of

respondents chose budgeting and financial processes as most important. This perception

coincides with previous studies indicating city managers have strong roles in preparing

and implementing the budget (DeSantis 1998). The high number for budgeting and

finance could be the result of city managers perceiving budget preparation as their

number one priority. Policy came next at 21 percent, followed by human resources at 7

percent and information management and technology applications at zero percent.

Information management and technology applications low score reflects a 2000 ICMA

survey denoting that many local governments are still in the early stage of information

technology development (Moon 2002).

Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis

City managers should have the ability to interpret complex reports and analyses, solve problems, make crucial and informed decisions, and create and implement policies and programs. The conceptual framework lists the topics in this section. **Table 5.2** summarizes the results of the topics in this field.

Table 5.2: City Manager Value Perceptions of Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis

Survey Questions As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the ability of:	N	% Fairly to Very Important	Mode	Rank % of Most Important
Policy and program formulation	80	97%	Very Important**	3%
Policy and program implementation and evaluation	81	97%	Very Important	21%
Decision-making	81	100%*	Very Important	35%
Problem solving	81	100%*	Very Important	42%

* No other choices selected
**24 percent selected "Fairly Important"

For this category, virtually no difference exists between abilities listed in **Table 5.2** for the city managers surveyed. The ability of decision-making and problem solving has identical response rates of 100 percent each.   The ability of formulating polices and programs and implementing policies and programs were next with a response rate of 97 percent each. In their role, whether classical or contemporary, the responses and the literature discussed earlier all confirm the necessity of having these professional

attributes. Data from above shows that city managers place great importance on all the abilities in this section. A near unanimous majority of respondents believe the abilities listed are very important for city management.

The rankings by city managers in this category are less clear. Respondents preferred problem solving as most important (42 percent), with decision-making close behind (35 percent).   Next in order is policy and program implementation and evaluation at 21 percent. Lastly, policy and program formulation received only 3 percent.

A majority of respondents value decision-making and problem solving as most important, similar to answers received in **Table 5.2**. Policy and program formulation represents the largest difference in scores. In **Table 5.2**, the component received 97 percent fairly /very important. But in **Table 5.7** located in **Appendix B**, only 3 percent perceived it as the most important component in the category, a difference of 94 percent. It seemed surprising since many city managers work directly with elected officials on issues of policy (Hassett and Watson 2002). The difference could be that the respondents view city councils and mayors as primary initiators of policies and programs, which has been the case historically.

Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment

Knowledge of the public policy and organizational environment require a city manager to embrace local actors and employees while understanding the internal and external forces impacting government and management. He ought to be familiar with how these concepts and institutions remain critical for environmental fitness of a municipality. **Table 5.3** sums up the responses for corresponding applicable topics.

Table 5.3: City Manager Value Perceptions of Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment

Survey Questions As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of:	N	% Fairly to Very Important	Mode	Rank % of Most Important
Political and legal institutions and processes	81	89%	Very Important*	33%
Economic and social institutions and processes	81	71%	Fairly Important**	3%
Organization and management concepts and behavior	80	86%	Very Important***	65%

*11 percent selected "Moderate Importance;"35 percent selected "Fairly Important"
**26 percent selected Moderate Importance;"46 percent selected "Fairly Important"
***13 percent selected "Moderate Importance;"36 percent selected "Fairly Important"

The results in **Table 5.3** are much different from the previous two reviewed. The degree of value placed on knowledge of political and legal institutions and processes is considered the most important (89 percent). This seems appropriate and ties in with the literature. A city manager must be familiar with local laws and ordinances and the political landscape. It is important because laws influence the ways a city manager works within a municipality (Koenig and Kise 1996).

Organization and management concepts came close behind (86 percent). This was interesting considering that principally, a city manager's main charge is to oversee the day-to-day affairs of the city (Fox and Schuhmann 1999). The small sizes of the communities could impact this perception. City managers in these towns may have more opportunity to meet regularly with staff, department heads, and elected officials.

Lastly, knowledge of economic and social institutions and processes received the least degree of importance (71 percent). Difference between the perceptions may be

caused by the size of the cities surveyed and their lack of community based economic and social institutions, as in enterprise funds and quality of life considerations. Therefore, in terms of knowledge of public policy and the organizational environment, the respondents believe all topics in **Table 5.3** are very important in their roles. Economic and social institutions and processes was perceived as only fairly important.

The components for the understanding of the public policy and organizational environment are ranked next. Organization and management concepts and behavior received 65 percent by respondents. This is not surprising. City managers are CEOs of a city, responsible for managing subordinates and upper-level department heads.

Subsequently, 33 percent of respondents chose political and legal institutions and processes. Whether city population size impacts the politics or laws of a community is unclear. Economic and social institutions and processes are last with only 3 percent. This percentage coincides with information management and technology applications. Both received the lowest percentage in the previous tables.

Administrative Ethics

Administrative ethics remains a cornerstone for a city manager. She must maintain a professional conduct above reproach and public scrutiny. Therefore, the ability to apply ethics in the workplace and carefully handle ethical dilemmas is a career prerequisite. The topics of ethical dilemmas and application of ethics is used to describe city manager perceptions relating to administrative ethics. **Table 5.4** summarizes the results of the questionnaire based on this category.

Table 5.4: City Manager Value Perceptions of Administrative Ethics

Survey Questions As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the ability of:	N	% Fairly to Very Important	Mode	Rank % of Most Important
Ethical dilemmas	80	90%	Very Important	14%
Application of ethics	81	94%	Very Important	86%

In all, the respondents placed a high degree of importance on the ability to manage both ethical dilemmas (90 percent) and applying ethics (94 percent). Each topic has a mode of very important. This reflects the perception that ethical matters are a part of the job in the working life of administrators and are difficult to avoid (Bowman and Williams 1997). The results indicate that the respondents are aware and influenced by administrative ethics in their roles.

When ranking the two available choices, 86 percent chose application of ethics over ethical dilemmas, which received 14 percent. "Ethics can only be fostered through top-level managers modeling ethical behavior and requiring the same from all others in an organization (Bowman and Williams 1997)." While both were highly rated in **Table 5.4**, the respondents appear to value the application of ethics more importantly than the handling of ethical dilemmas.

Skill Set

Skill set is in reference to a specific group of skills city managers should possess in their current roles as chief administrators. The skill of writing, public speaking, and

bargaining and negotiating are considered mainstays of the profession. **Table 5.5** summarizes the results from the respondents for these survey items.

Table 5.5: City Manager Value Perceptions of Skill Set

Survey Questions As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the skill of	N	% Fairly to Very Important	Mode	Rank % of Most Important
Writing	81	95%	Very Important*	38%
Public speaking	80	89%	Very Important**	25%
Bargaining and negotiating	81	86%	Very Important***	38%

*35 percent selected "Fairly Important"
**10 percent selected "Moderate Importance;" 37 percent selected "Fairly Important"
***12 percent selected "Moderate Importance;" 42 percent selected "Fairly Important"

For all items in the questions, the respondents selected fairly / very important for each. Writing received the greatest percentage of response (95 percent), while public speaking came next (89 percent). Bargaining and negotiating (86 percent) follows closely to the other responses in percentage. Results from **Table 5.5** indicate city managers perceive all three to be fairly / very important, but most particularly writing. The high degree of importance for this skill can be explained because the occupation requires a great amount of written communication in multiple formats and versions irregardless of city size. In sum, **Table 5.5** shows that respondent attitudes toward skills is important professionally for their positions.

Skill set is also the last category ranked by city managers. The responses here were closest in comparison to all previous categories. Writing and bargaining and

negotiating each received identical scores of 38 percent. Public speaking is last with 25

percent. The lack of a clear consensus indicates respondent roles in each municipality

may require different skills dependent on community needs. As seen in **Table 5.5**,

writing was rated fairly / very important by 95 percent while bargaining and negotiation

received the lowest at 86 percent. But here, the two topics share identical weight in

percentage.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarized and examined the results of the survey distributed. Data

from the survey indicates that all NASPAA curriculum components are perceived as

fairly / very important in current city manager roles. Information indicates some topics,

as in budgeting and financial processes, decision-making, and problem solving, are

perceived more important than others. When ranked categorically, application of ethics

and budgeting and financial processes received the highest percentage. The next chapter

summarizes the research and provides recommendations for future study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of the chapter is to summarize the data from the research of city manager knowledge, skills, and abilities. City manager perceptions are assessed to provide further insight to what is most valued in their profession. Steps and for future research are also explored.

Summary of Research

The purpose of the research was to ascertain the degree of importance current city managers place on their knowledge, skills, and abilities through using the common curriculum components for professional graduate degree programs of NASPAA. Most city managers hold masters degrees in public administration and affairs. Many of the programs offering degrees in these areas are either accredited or seek accreditation by NASPAA. The effect is a relationship between the two separate institutions on what curriculum should be taught. NASPAA has pre-developed standards which apply to all programs seeking accreditation.

To discern city manager knowledge, skills, and abilities, scholarly literature was reviewed. This led to the development of five individual categories; (1) management of public service organizations, (2) application of quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis, (3) understanding of the public policy and organizational environment, (4) administrative ethics, and (5) skill set. Finally, a conceptual framework was developed using descriptive categories through the literature.

Survey questionnaires were distributed to collect data from current city managers in populations of 25,000 or less. The response rate totaled 47 percent for the 171 city managers contacted. The results were gathered and the statistical analysis conducted using modes and percentages, as discussed in Chapter 5. **Table 6.1** summarizes the results of city manager perceptions on NASPAA curriculum components. The mode and ranking for each of the components are provided for analysis.

Table 6.1: Summary of Results

Curriculum Standards	Components	Mode	Rank*
Management Of Public Service Organizations	o Budgeting and Financial Processes o Policy o Human Resources o Information Management and Technology Applications	Very Important Very Important Very Important Fairly Important	1 2 3 4
Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis	o Problem Solving o Decision-making o Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation o Policy and Program Formulation	Very Important Very Important Very Important Very Important	1 2 3 4
Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment	o Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior o Political and Legal Institutions and Processes o Economic and Social Institutions and Processes	Very Important Very Important Fairly Important	1 2 3
Administrative Ethics	o Application of Ethics o Ethical Dilemmas	Very Important Very Important	1 2
Skill Set	o Writing o Bargaining and Negotiating o Public Speaking	Very Important Very Important Very Important	1 (tied) 1 (tied) 2

* Respondents ranking of which is the most important component in each category

The results indicated that overall, city managers overwhelmingly perceived all the NASPAA curriculum components to be very important in their roles. Over two-thirds of the respondents indicated that all topics advocated by NASPAA are important regarding

their knowledge, skills, and abilities. As seen in **Table 6.1**, every component is

perceived as very important in their roles, with the exception of two.

Also, the levels of importance cited by city managers in these smaller cities suggest how

much value is associated with their roles and responsibilities. Now, not all respondents

chose "Very Important" for every question. But, a majority did in a majority of

questions. The consistency of the responses does show the degree of perception on how

much administrative involvement is necessary to manage a less populous municipality.

As one city manager stated, "The importance questions could have all been answered as

very important. A city manager has to be a "jack of all trades" and have answers to every

situation and dilemma[17]." Knowledge, skills, and abilities in all areas, despite the

perceived importance, are not simply disregarded.

More interesting may be the components ranked as most important in each

category. The survey questions asking these city managers of small municipalities to

rank the items most important in each category revealed importance of particular

curriculum components. While all curriculum items are important, some hold more

importance than others.   Of the highest rankings, these city managers found that problem

solving, budgeting and financial institutions and processes, organization and management

concepts and behavior, application of ethics, writing, and bargaining and negotiation

were the most important for their respective categories. Not all city managers can be

portrayed this way. The degree of importance could vary from studying cities of larger

population size or another geographic region of the country. City managers operating

within these larger cities may value different knowledge, skills, and abilities.

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[17] Number 3 under the Comments table located in Appendix D.

The results from the survey were rather surprising. The lack of disparity in responses for questions concerning the descriptive categories was unanticipated. For example, not one city manager responded with "Little or No Importance" to any of the questions asked. Even for the two components receiving the least importance, information management and technology applications and economic and social institutions and processes, only three respondents used "Seldom Important" out of eighty-one total. Overall agreement by the city managers from small municipalities for all categories largely supported the standards and guidelines NASPAA uses for accreditation.

Three reasons could be behind the high percentage of importance for the responses. First, because the inherent nature of the NASPAA standards prescribes generalization of curriculum, the components used for the survey can appear vague and permit ambiguity. For example, at first glance, the component of economic and social institutions and processes seemed unclear and indefinable before researching the literature. No explanation or clarification exists within the NASPAA standards for each particular curriculum component. Curriculum components should have some background information to support its use in the accreditation process. Because no background is present, it is up to the individual programs, the reader, and / or COPRA to decide or decode.

Second, city managers truly have enormous responsibilities, irregardless of community size, as seen by the literature review. Even mundane or bottom rung issues and concepts still, in the very least, hold some importance. One city manager surveyed stated, "All of the items you identified above are important and in a small community the

manager may need to have a fairly good mastery of all, given that small communities have fewer experts in these key/critical roles[18]." The profession is uniquely complex and demands a high-level of competence. Therefore, the importance placed on all of the curriculum components is understandable. This could help explain the relatively high percentages from respondents who valued the components as very important.

Third, city managers working in small municipalities could have more duties and responsibilities than those working in cities of larger population. The small cities surveyed may vary on external and internal factors, such as amount of city staff, size of local budget, or overall economic health, even if their population sizes are comparable. As previously discussed, 85 percent of the city managers responding to this survey were from cities with population of 14,999 or less. Only 15 percent of the city managers responding represented municipalities of 15,000-24,999. Since cities with populations of less than 15,000 make up the majority of respondents, the high percentage ratings of "Very Important" from the survey could be the result of the limited number of resources and / or staff available within their municipalities. Therefore, the degree of importance placed on the components is especially high because the city managers in these cities could be responsible for more operations than those with greater access to human or financial resources.

Steps for Future Research

Beside city manager attitudes and perceptions, educational needs must also be met. Though NASPAA prescribes curriculum specifically for graduate programs in

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[18] Number 12 under the Comments table located in Appendix D.

public administration, they are not responsible for execution. The curriculum components are only one piece of a larger whole in the accreditation process. The literature and the survey both stipulate that a majority of city managers hold MPA graduate degrees. Therefore, it seems NASPAA has a responsibility to prepare students for this type of public service. This could result in more professionalized managing of cities, improved curriculum reflecting student interests, and better prepared city managers and public servants.

Another area of concern deals with available literature. Not much scholarly literature exists on city management, especially on specific skills needed to excel. The deficiency in literature could derive from city management being a somewhat contemporary field. But, much of the literature that does exist is almost a decade old. It was a struggle to acquire much literature in the field. No other position in American government seems to compare to a city manager. It requires specialization and knowledge in many areas and topics. This should be another area where the ICMA and NASPAA can combine efforts and encourage further research.

Third, retirement and succession planning for city managers should be addressed. The profession, like many others in the public sector, is approaching a wave of baby-boomer retirement. Because knowledge and experience is paramount for managing a city, developing and implementing training and / or curriculum is crucial. It would be encouraging for NASPAA and the ICMA to continue their cooperation and produce a comprehensive solution. One suggestion would be to contact previous and current city managers to provide stories and accounts of careers in the field. Research in the area

could lead to improvements for all levels of public sector management, not simply city management.

Fourth, city manager knowledge, skills, and abilities could be better evaluated if further studies are conducted using the same framework but measuring cities of different population size. It could be possible that managers of cities with 50,000 to 100,000 or 250,000 to one million people perceive other components to be more or less valuable than those in this study. States in other areas of the country might also show differences. It is conceivable city manager perceptions on roles are affected by the size of the community managed. More research needs to be conducted before any significant assessment can be made.

Fifth, the curriculum components do not represent the only knowledge, skills, and abilities city managers from small cities need to possess. Other knowledge, skills, and abilities not used in this survey were noted by the respondents who chose to elaborate in the "Comments" section of the questionnaire. For example, one city manager left the following statement.

> In small cities, you face three important problems, **asset allocation**, **community direction**, and **city council training**. You never have enough money to do what is necessary. It is difficult to direct community goals. And most important, the council is made up of volunteers who must develope policy for the City staff to implement[19].

Another comment from this section of the survey indicates three additional areas of perceived importance for city managers.

> The three greatest skills needed, in my opinion, are **diplomacy**, **adaptability** and **recovery**. Regardless of how skilled you are or how much you know you will be caught out and found lacking at some point. The expectations are often unrealistic and you will frequently be dealing with folks who know little or nothing about the issues at hand and know

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[19] Number 11 under the Comments table located in Appendix D.

nothing about you, other than the fact that you are the Authority Figure they must deal with. You will find that keeping your job, regardless of how technically skilled you are, will become the greatest challenge. Live to fight another day will become your mantra, and you will recite it many times before your career is complete. I wish you well in your career, and always remember that you must love this work to do it well at all. Like Moses, although you may not get to cross over into the promised land you will still be greatly blessed[20].

The knowledge, skills, and abilities cited by the two city managers in this section were not examined in the survey. Yet, their perceived importance to each of these current city managers is evident from their explanation. If these important aspects are universal among smaller municipalities in Texas is unknown. For a more accurate assessment of specific knowledge, skills, and abilities, more questions must be asked and future research should be conducted.

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[20] Number 2 under the Comments table located in Appendix D.

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Appendix A – General Characteristics

Table: Highest Level of Education Achieved

Survey Question	N*	Percentage
High School	0	0%
Some College	8	10%
College Graduate (B.A. or B.S.)	16	20%
Some post-graduate work	13	16%
Graduate degree	43	53%
Other	1**	1%

*N = 81
**This person responded that they have a PhD

Table: Type of graduate or Master's degree achieved

Survey Question	N**	Percentage***
MPA*	34	51%
MBA	5	8%
Engineering	1	2%
Education	0	0%
J.D.	0	0%
Other	5	8%
Not Applicable	22	33%

*This includes public administration or affairs
**13 respondents skipped this question
***Percentage may be over 100 due to rounding

Table: Gender of respondents

Survey Questions	N	Percentage
Male	70	86%
Female	11	14%

Table: Current Age Range of City Managers

Survey Questions	N	Percentage*
Under 30	2	3%
Under 35	3	4%
Under 40	9	11%
40 and over	67	83%

*Percentage may be more than 100 due to rounding

Table: Current City Population Size

Survey Questions	N	Percentage
0-4,999	27	33%
5,000-9,999	25	31%
10,000-14,999	17	21%
15,000-19,999	5	6%
20,000-24,999	6	7%
At or over 25,000	1	1%

Table: Length of Employment at Current City

Survey Questions	N	Percentage
0-3 years	35	43%
4-6 years	27	33%
7-9 years	11	14%
10 years or more	8	10%

Table: Career Length of Employment as a City Manager

Survey Questions	N	Percentage
0-3 years	13	16%
4-6 years	17	21%
7-9 years	18	22%
10 years or more	33	41%

Table: Region of the State of Texas where city is located

Survey Questions	N	Percentage
North	20	25%
South	11	14%
East	11	14%
West	13	16%
Central	26	32%

*Percentage may be more than 100 due to rounding

Appendix B – Most Important by Category

Table: Most Important Sub-topic of Management of Public Service Organizations

Survey Question*	N	Percentage
Human Resources	6	7%
Budgeting and Financial Processes	58	72%
Information Management and Technology Applications	0	0%
Policy	17	21%

* "In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?"

Table: Most Important Sub-topic of the Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis

Survey Question*	N	Percentage**
Policy and Program Formulation	2	3%
Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation	17	21%
Decision-making	28	35%
Problem Solving	34	42%

* "In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?"
** Percentage may be more than 100 due to rounding

Table: Most Important Sub-topic of the Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment

Survey Question*	N**	Percentage***
Political and Legal Institutions and Processes	26	33%
Economic and Social Institutions and Processes	2	3%
Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior	52	65%

* "In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?"
**One person skipped this question
*** Percentage may be more than 100 due to rounding

Table: Most Important Sub-topic of Administrative Ethics

Survey Question*	N	Percentage
Ethical Dilemmas	11	14%
Application of Ethics	70	86%

* "In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?"

Table: Most Important Sub-topic of Skill Set

Survey Question*	N	Percentage**
Writing	30	38%
Public Speaking	20	25%
Bargaining and Negotiating	30	38%

* "In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?"
**Percentage may be more than 100 due to rounding

Appendix C – Survey Questionnaire

Descriptive Categories	Survey Questions*
Management of Public Service Organizations	
o Human Resources	1. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of human resources in your role?
o Budgeting and Financial Processes	2. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of budgeting and financial processes in your role?
o Information Management and Technology Applications	3. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of information management and technology applications in your role?
o Policy	4. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of policy in your role?
Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis	
o Policy and Program Formulation	5. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the ability to formulate policy and programs in your role?
o Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation	6. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the ability to implement and evaluate policy and programs in your role?
o Decision-making	7. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the ability of decision-making in your role?
o Problem Solving	8. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the ability of problem solving in your role?
Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment	
o Political and Legal Institutions and Processes	9. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of the political and legal institutions and processes in your role?
o Economic and Social Institutions and Processes	10. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of economic and social institutions and processes in your role?
o Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior	11. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of organization and management concepts and behavior in your role?

Administrative Ethics	
o Ethical Dilemmas	12. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the ability to handle ethical dilemmas in your role?
o Application of Ethics	13. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the ability to apply ethics in your role?
Skill Set	
o Writing	14. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the skill of writing in your role?
o Public Speaking	15. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the skill of public speaking in your role?
o Bargaining and Negotiating	16. As a current city manager, what degree of importance would you place on the skill of bargaining and negotiating in your role?
Answer Key	**General Characteristics Questions****
1. High school 2. Some college 3. College graduate (B.A. or B.S.) 4. Some post-graduate work 5. Graduate degree 6. Other	17. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
1. MPA (this includes public administration or affairs) 2. MBA 3. Engineering 4. Education 5. J.D. 6. Other 7. Not Applicable	18. If you have achieved a graduate or Master's degree, what kind of degree or field was it in?
1. Male 2. Female	19. Please specify your gender
1. Under 30 2. Under 35 3. Under 40 4. 40 or over	20. Please specify your current age range
1. 0-4,999 2. 5,000-9,999 3. 10,000-14,999 4. 15,000-19,999 5. 20,000-24,999 6. At or over 25,000	21. What is the current population size of your city?

1. 0-3 years 2. 4-6 years 3. 7-9 years 4. 10 years or more	22. How long have you been employed as city manager at your current city?
1. 0-3 years 2. 4-6 years 3. 7-9 years 4. 10 years or more	23. How long have you been a city manager in your career?
Most Important by Category	**Questions**
1. Human Resources 2. Budgeting and Financial Processes 3. Information Management and Technology Applications 4. Policy	25. In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?
1. Policy and Program Formulation 2. Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation 3. Decision-making 4. Problem Solving	26. In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?
1. Political and Legal Institutions and Processes 2. Economic and Social Institutions and Processes 3. Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior	27. In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?
1. Ethical Dilemmas 2. Application of Ethics	28. In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?
1. Writing 2. Public Speaking 3. Bargaining and Negotiating	29. In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?
1. Comments	30. Comments

*Survey questions use the Likert scale and rank the responses on a 5 point scale (1-Little or No Importance, to 5-Very Important).

**Additional questions used to gain insight on characteristics of respondents

Appendix D: Survey Comments

Table: Comments from Survey Questionnaire

1	Managing small cities is a tough yet rewarding career. Thanks for the interest in the little guys.
2	Dear Mr. Sinclair, I applaud your pursuit of a career in Public Administration and I am happy to respond to your survey. As a practitioner in the field for some 30+ years I hope you will allow me the lattitude of a bit of constructive criticism. Your survey focuses on a list of technical skills and attempts to rank them in relative degree of importance. Given the nature of this work I can assure you that each of these skills has maximum value and importance at any given moment in time, and there are times when all are called upon. Failure to perform at the highest level of competence at any time can result in serious erosion of confidence in a Manager's ability regardless of how well they have performed on other occasions. It's always "What have you done for us lately?" out here in the lonely world of City Managers. The three greatest skills needed, in my opinion, are diplomacy, adaptability and recovery. Regardless of how skilled you are or how much you know you will be caught out and found lacking at some point. The expectations are often unrealistic and you will frequently be dealing with folks who know little or nothing about the issues at hand and know nothing about you, other than the fact that you are the Authority Figure they must deal with. You will find that keeping your job, regardless of how technically skilled you are, will become the greatest challenge. Live to fight another day will become your mantra, and you will recite it many times before your career is complete. I wish you well in your career, and always remember that you must love this work to do it well at all. Like Moses, although you may not get to cross over into the promised land you will still be greatly blessed. Good luck and Godspeed in your career.
3	The importance questions could have all been answered as very important. A city manager has to be a "jack of all trades" and have answers to every situation and dillema.
4	I also have a doctorate.
5	Suggest the option of ranking items in Quex 25-29 to secure more info for evaluation.
6	Overly simplistic
7	Easy to use. Great format.
8	Well thought out and presented survey.
9	It is always to respond fully to surveys because the answer is never one response, it is normally the marriage or partnership of concepts. Management is not a one dimensional process.
10	Would like to know the results of your survey
11	In small cities, you face three important problems, asset allocation, community direction, and city council training. You never have enough money to do what is necessary. It is difficult to direct community goals. And most important, the council is made up of volunteers who must develope policy for the City staff to implement.
12	All of the items you identified above are important and in a small community the manager may need to have a fairly good mastery of all, given that small communities have fewer experts in these key/critical roles.