Lessons for the Future: A Convening of Practitioners

Summary Report

November 4-5, 2022

LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2030

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Executive Summary

Local Government 2030 – Lessons for the Future: A Convening of Practitioners (the Convening) took place November 4-5, 2022, on the University of Nebraska Omaha Campus in Omaha, Nebraska. The event brought together 50 practitioners under the age of 40 from cities, counties, and regional councils around the United States to serve as delegates in defining and shaping the future of local governance.

Delegates were responsible for coordinating with others in their local government discipline to define and research common challenges and develop white papers and presentations prior to the Convening. While at the Convening, delegates engaged in a series of cross-discipline conversations and exercises that ultimately built to the development of three actions that the delegates have committed to advancing and implementing in their disciplines and communities. The three actions are highlighted below.

GROW a Resilient Workforce

One of the consistent challenges faced in local government relates to recruiting, developing, and retaining talented, dedicated employees. Delegates recognized the need to reframe local government as an employer of choice and to address persistent challenges by increasing exposure to public service careers, supporting inclusion and belonging, offering opportunities for mentorship and leadership development, and pursuing wage equity and innovative benefits.

Promised Pathways

The third action also builds a resilient local government workforce by supporting justice-impacted individuals, specifically low-level offenders and those formerly incarcerated, as well as their families, through employment opportunities in the public sector. This action focuses on building trust, removing barriers, and creating employment opportunities across departments at different levels. Delegates envision creation or changes related to promised pathways in local ordinances, codifying policies to include the private sector, and workforce development initiatives to help fill positions with high turnover.

The Art of Public Service – the Communication Continuum

Delegates across the disciplines also noted a decline in the public's trust in local government, particularly over the last several years. To address this challenge, the second action calls for evolving community engagement and developing an approach for community engagement that incorporates emotional intelligence. This will be accomplished through a toolkit of resources specifically designed to support local governments of different sizes and types in deploying best practices, incorporating inclusive storytelling, and building on-going dialogues with meaningful follow-up.

The following report details the proceedings of the Convening and provides more detail and initial implementation steps on the three actions to carry forward.

Introduction

Background

In 2019, the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) issued a call to all government professionals to address the "Grand Challenges" facing our nation. In response, an ad hoc group of local government professionals around the country started meeting in 2020 to develop actionable projects to meet these Grand Challenges. One consistent message emerged from these discussions: We need individuals from all local government professions to come together to provide leadership in implementing solutions.

Local Government 2030 – Lessons for the Future: A Convening of Practitioners was modeled after the Minnowbrook Conferences, which started in 1968 and continued in 1988 and 2018, as forums for reimagining the field of public administration. The 50 practitioners under the age of 40 (delegates) were charged with breaking down silos and creating the groundwork for change. The delegates were drawn from the following seven local government disciplines:

- General Administration (Managers, Attorneys, and Clerks)
- Finance or Budgeting
- Public Works or Utilities (including Water, Wastewater, and Transportation)
- Administrative Services (including Human Resources, Information Technology, Communications, Equity, and Sustainability)
- Community Services (including Parks, Recreation, Library, and Arts)
- Public Safety and Human Services (including Police, Fire, Public Health, and Social Services)
- Planning and Economic Development (including Community Development and Housing)

Prior to the Convening, delegates worked within their disciplines to develop short white papers to encapsulate their visions for the future of local government, which were subsequently circulated to all delegates. Generally, the papers described the array of services provided by each of the disciplines; trends related to what each discipline is asked to do and how it is asked to do it; what they feel properly equipped to handle and where they struggle to provide service; the role of professional associations in meeting these challenges; the changing needs between now and 2030; and how the challenges they experience connect to the NAPA Grand Challenges. Super delegates, leaders within their professions who participated in the Convening as coaches and support for the delegates, reviewed and provided input on the papers.

Delegates also worked within their disciplines to create 20-slide, seven-minute presentations summarizing their findings and white papers. This PechaKucha style of presentation allows for presenters to embrace a storytelling framework that encourages less telling and more showing through thoughtful imagery and few (or no) words on each slide. The delegates' PechaKucha presentations were delivered to the full group on the morning of the first day of the Convening, to help the full group understand the challenges and opportunities faced by each of the disciplines.

Introductions and Hopes for the Future

Participants introduced themselves at their tables and shared their hopes for local government in 2030. Their hopes were then presented to the full group and captured in the following graphic map.
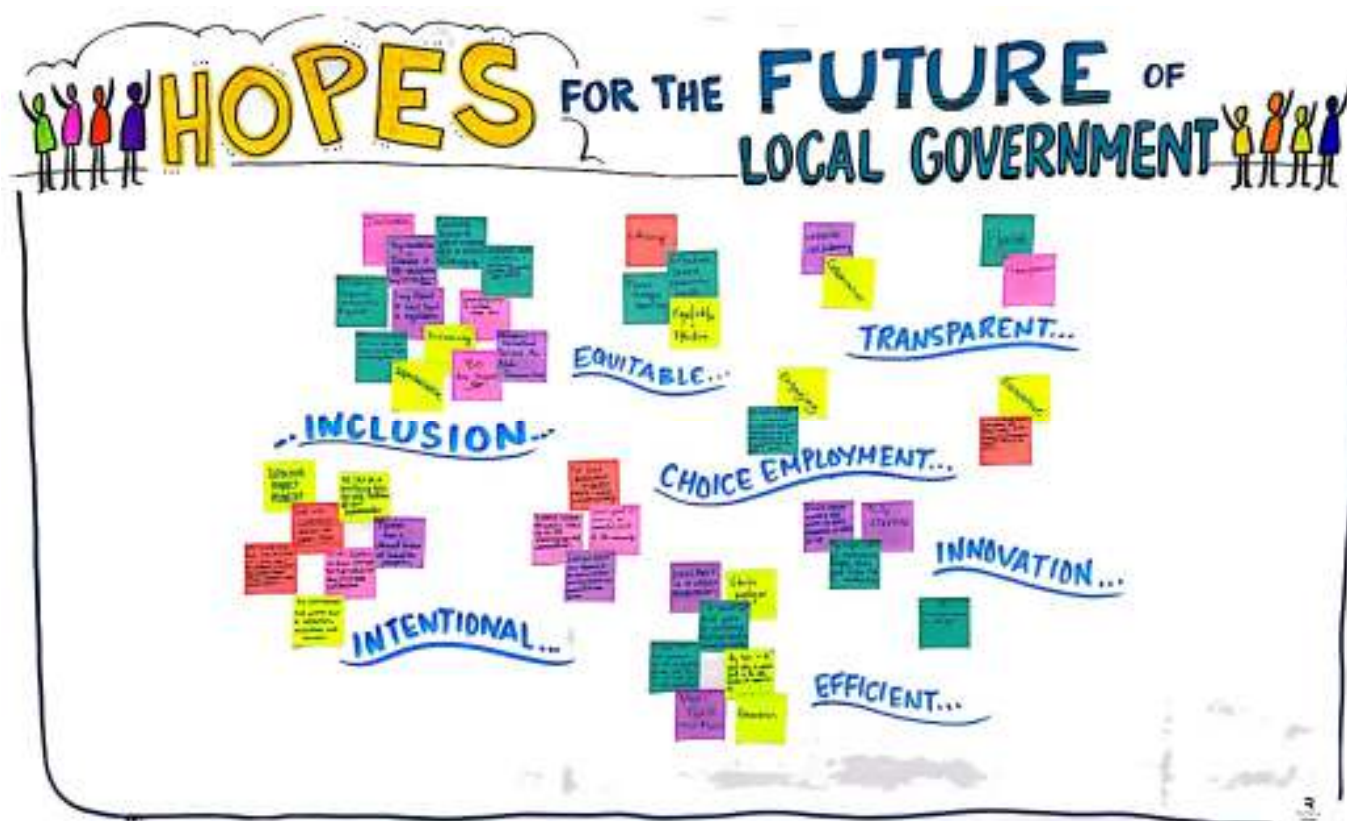
Hopes included:

- Representative and inclusive of all stakeholders
- Completely inclusive, where everyone feels a sense of belonging
- Innovation, equity, efficiency, inclusion become universal core values
- Opportunity and access for all
- Necessary and recreational services for all communities
- Be all inclusive government
- Inclusivity
- Representative
- Every aspect of local government is equitable
- To bring disparate communities together
- Inclusive
- Local government will be a force that breaks barriers instead of creating them
- Trust through service
- Effective shared community needs
- Equitable and effective
- Efficiency
- Enhanced collaboration

- Collaborative
- Flexible
- Transparent
- Engaging
- Innovative
- Local government can better adapt to the changing needs of the public
- Enhance community services and have a public-facing tool for engagement with the people it serves
- Collective impact mindset
- We can be a unifying force for the betterment of our communities
- Lead with intention and challenge the status quo
- Create supportive, inclusive communities that help residents live their most fulfilling lives
- Create impact
- An environment and culture that is reflective, ambitious, and relevant
- A desired future based on shared prosperity
- Local government is a choice profession
- Choice employer
- A career in local government is considered accomplished and valued by society
- A desirable and fun place to work for future generations
- Non-toxic (literally and figuratively)
- Retention
- Normalize people who look like me in leadership
- Inclusive, engaged workforce that reflects the diverse communities in which we live
- Fully staffed
- Zero firefighter deaths in 2030

Trends

After each group completed its PechaKucha presentation, each table was assigned a mega trend to discuss as it related to the future of local government. Trends included:

- Political
- Environmental
- Social
- Technological
- Economic
- Workforce

Each group was asked to discuss how each trend was being experienced in the community, as well as the challenges that each trend presented for local government service delivery. After each group shared their thoughts, the larger group responded with how local government might respond to the trend in the future. The report-out and subsequent discussion is captured in the following graphic map.

Political

Top trends in this area included:

- Increased engagement and awareness around politics
- Increased polarization (City, County, State, Federal)
- Combatting lack of public trust (greater need for transparency)
- Increased expectations at the local level
- Political violence
- Politicization of the apolitical
- Global partnerships

In response, local governments need to:

- Address past orientation to top-down government
- Recognize that the future is participatory processes
- Create big changes fast to avoid crashing democracy
- Make government services more accessible and less complicated

Environmental

Top trends in this area included:
- Resource scarcity/stress (water, energy, food, etc. while there's also a desire for more)
- Interaction of facts and narratives (politics, information representation, politicization)
- Lack of systems thinking (considering negative externalities)
- Environmental justice
- Lack of inter-jurisdictional governance response

Social

Top trends in this area included:
- Equity and social justice
- Budgeting, revenue, comprehensive DEI, ADA, etc.
- Transparency, public trust
- Communication and engagement with the community
- Lack of civility, entitled members of the public

In response, local governments need to:
- Be intentional about meeting people where they are
- Build awareness and intentionality
- Rethink who is facilitating public engagement
- Reframe the obligation of addressing community belonging
- Break down departmental silos
- Remain curious
- Be multilingual
- Set boundaries on what's appropriate
- Work with local practitioners/end-users

Technological

Top trends in this area included:
- Maintaining cyber security and aging infrastructure (costs)
- Digital divide (hardware, skills, etc.)
- Technological innovation – different models (in-person and virtual) maintained with few new resources
- Online public square
- Technology/information literacy
- Human factor, training needs
- Automation

In response, local governments need to:
- Be curious (things are changing fast)
- Get bolder in addressing misinformation
- Be less afraid of failure
- Identify where information gaps exist between local governments and communities
- Train the workforce
- Reduce technology resistance
- Recognize necessary investments

Economic

Top trends in this area included:
- Supply chain
- Inflation/wealth gap/increasing inequality/food deserts
- Workforce (compensation, work experience, etc.) – drive to expand services without desire to pay additional costs
- Communication and public engagement/awareness
- Regional competition
- Income stagnation

In response, local governments need to:
- Be thoughtful about how/what we chose to invest in
- Maximize infrastructure (vertical vs. sprawl)
- Increase collaboration (regionally/private partners)
- Do more with less (process improvements/efficiencies)
- Hold developers accountable for affordable housing and equity

Workforce

Top trends in this area included:
- Pay and benefits aren't aligned with worker preferences
- Lack of diversity and inclusion
- Compassion fatigue (hard to retain people)
- Trust issues – no one trusts their government, and people don't always believe that their employer has their best interests at heart
- Work-life balance
- Hybrid/remote work
- Non-traditional pathways to the workforce
- Generational values
- Want to hire experienced people as quick fixes, rather than training folks

In response, local governments need to:
- Get expert advice/training on topics like DEI
- Incentivize people to enter local government
- Create roadmaps to succession
- Reduce barriers to hiring

Inter-disciplinary Conversations

After concluding the discussion of the trends, participants broke into three rooms; each room represented a separate jurisdiction. Jurisdictions were charged with diving deeper into the papers and presentations that had been generated by each of the discipline groups, reflecting on the mega-trends and their impacts on local government, and reimagining local government for 2030.

Specifically, groups were asked to identify three major challenges that local government will face over the next several years. Once the challenges were identified, the groups worked to analyze the challenges through several lenses and come to consensus on tangible actions that can and should be taken now to prepare for the future.

Delegates and Super Delegates split into three groups to think through each challenge from a programmatic, technological, political, financial, and structural standpoint. Each sub-group was charged with developing three potential actions that might be advanced on behalf of the Jurisdiction to the larger convening.

Jurisdiction A

Jurisdiction A was comprised of participants who were generally from municipalities in the eastern United States. Each participant was asked to introduce themselves, share a key takeaway from the morning's activities, and share the top challenges that they would like to spend their time addressing. Potential challenges to address included:
- Workforce challenges
- Innovation and modernization of service delivery
- Increasing demand for services
- Public engagement and trust
- Equity and representation
- Use of technology

Ultimately, the three challenges that the group elected to focus on were:
- Workforce challenges
- Public engagement and trust
- Innovation and modernization of service delivery

Challenge: Workforce Challenges

Initial brainstorming and conversation related to workforce challenges is shown in the graphic map below.

The subgroup identified three focus areas:
- Equitable and competitive pay
- Detoxifying workplace culture
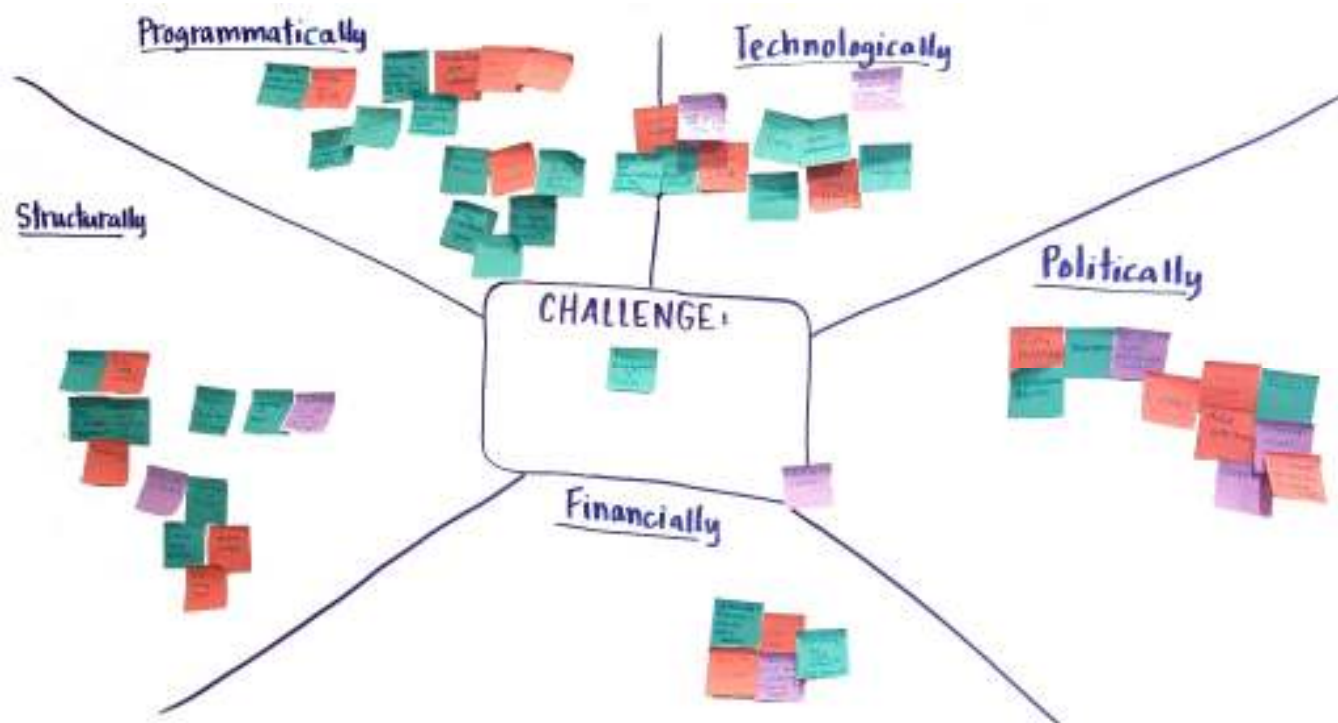- Developing an engaged and resilient workforce

For each of the focus areas, participants were asked to share what the proposed initiative is and why it is important to advancing local government.

Initiative	What?	Why?
Equitable and Competitive Pay	• Compensation and benefits studies • Recognizing experience and expertise • Advocacy to governing body and public related to public servant worth	• Recruit and retain talent • Show value in employee's work
Detoxifying Workplace Culture	• Communication • Clear mission, vision, values • Leadership listening • Psychological safety • Providing necessary resources • Normalizing minorities in leadership	• Build trust within the workforce • People feel safe and valued at work • Retaining talent • Preventing burnout

Initiative	What?	Why?
Recruiting, Retaining, and Developing an Engaged, Equitable, and Resilient Workforce	• Clear career progression • Advocacy through mentorship and training • Succession planning • Leadership development • Expand the talent pipeline • Skill-based hiring • How to: hire, retain, promote, treat	• To retain talent • Eliminate the loss of institutional knowledge

Challenge: Public Engagement and Trust

Initial brainstorming and conversation related to public engagement and trust challenges is shown in the graphic map below.

The subgroup identified three focus areas:
- Develop community ambassadors
- Establish regular, open-ended engagement
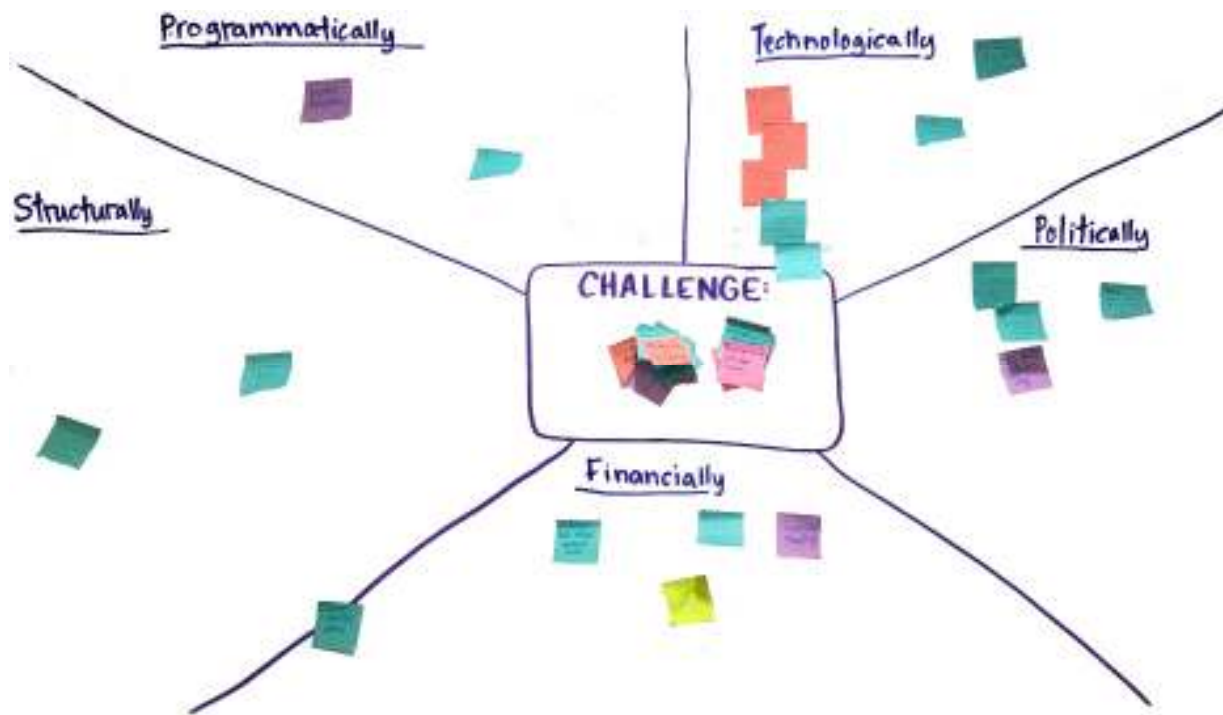- Humanize local government

For each of the focus areas, participants were asked to share what the proposed initiative is, and why it is important to advancing local government.

Initiative	What?	Why?
Develop Community Ambassadors	• Cultivate City social media influencers • Citizens to engage with other citizens online • Non-digital ambassadors with existing community leaders • Multi-lingual/multimedia/underserved populations	• Combat misinformation/disinformation • Build trust
Establish regular, open-ended engagement	• Regular meetings, not specific items • Continuous communications • Be where people already are • Scaled to the neighborhood level • Multi-lingual/multimedia/underserved populations	• Reaching people most impacted • Building trust • Repetition and follow-through • Owning our mistakes
Humanize local government	• Make administrative staff more approachable • Coordinating staff availability with existing community events /at community spaces (meet them where they are) • Staff spotlights and highlights (new employees, promotions, etc.)	• To show administration and public servants are part of the community, care for the community, and want what's best for the communities we serve • Build trust and community connections • Assist with recruitment, retention, and building a workplace community

Challenge: Innovation and Modernization of Service Delivery

Initial brainstorming and conversation related to innovation and modernization of service delivery challenges is shown in the graphic map below.

The subgroup identified three focus areas:

- Build a culture of innovation through education (create an accreditation)
- Strategic planning (templates, identified pain points, on-boarding, support cultural changes)
- Data dashboard (national hub, increased access, etc.)

For each of the focus areas, participants were asked to share what the proposed initiative is, and why it is important to advancing local government.

Initiative	What?	Why?
Build a culture of innovation through education (create an accreditation)	• Advocate for minimum standards for local government employees • Partner with other organizations • Digital academy • Local government best practices certification	• Distrust • Cross-training • Communicating the value • Seniority over expertise
Strategic planning (templates, identified pain points, on-boarding, support cultural changes)	• Identify "pain points" and evaluate in the strategic plan • Incorporate into promotional process/on-boarding • Budget planning • On-boarding/mentorship/orientation	• Values are where your money is • Most people don't know what a strategic plan is • Make modernization sustainable – audit what you have and find one sustainable, innovative project
Data dashboard (national hub, increased access, etc.)	• Technology offering • Collaboration with conference partners and academics • Features include mapping equity, funding results, data sources, templates	• Process improvements – doing more with yes • Public engagement tool • Story telling • Informed policy and decision-making

Actions to Move Forward

After reviewing each of the nine actions proposed by the sub-groups, all Delegates in Jurisdiction A were polled to identify the three that they would dig into further. The graphic below shows the poll results.

Actions to Address Challenges

1. Develop Community Ambassadors
2. Establish regular, open-ended engagement
3. Humanize local government
4. Equitable and competitive pay
5. Detoxifying workplace culture
6. Developing an engaged and resilient workforce
7. Building a culture of innovation through education (create an accreditation)
8. Strategic planning (templates, identified pain points, on-boarding, support cultural changes)
9. Data Dashboard (national hub, increased access, etc.)

The top two actions selected were **establishing regular, open-ended engagement** and **strategic planning related to innovation and modernization**. After discussion, the group elected to combine the next two actions as part of **developing an engaged and resilient workforce.** After further discussion and refinement, the final three actions were:

- GROW Your Own Workforce
- Committing to Innovation through Continuous Improvement
- Build meaningful long-term connections to create an intentionally connected community

For each action, the subgroups spent time further clarifying what the activity would be, how the activities impact all disciplines in local government, and why it matters for all communities.

Initiative	What?	How?	Why?

GROW Your Own Workforce	• **G**ive Exposure to Public Service
	• **R**elentless Commitment to Inclusion and Belonging
	• **O**pportunities for mentorship and leadership development
	• **W**age Equity
		Give Exposure to Public Service
		  o Partner with academic and vocational institutions
		  o Open talent pipelines through non-traditional candidate pools
		  o Start jr. academies for service disciplines
		  o Pivot away from experience-based hiring toward skills-based hiring
		Relentless commitment to inclusion and belonging
		  o Use mission, vision, values in hiring
		  o Culture adds over culture fit
		  o Improve communication to prevent gatekeeping
		  o Promote cross-training
		Opportunities for mentorship and leadership development
		  o Identify future leaders within the workforce
		  o Be willing to take risks on non-traditional, less experienced candidates
		Wage equity
		  o Create policies that require regular compensation reviews and updates
		  o Analyze for internal equity and market-based compensation (including private sector)
			• Vacancies due to
			  o Disrespect
			  o Burn-out
			  o Inequitable/non-competitive pay
			• Solutions
			  o Passionate, committed, dedicated teams
			  o Top talent
			  o Focus on excellent service delivery

Initiative	What?	How?	Why?
Committing to Innovation through Continuous Improvement	• Develop a continuous improvement model, including a self-assessment template, peer review, and award • Identify opportunities that create value, ensure accountability, and achieve results	• Empower all employees • Be proactive, not reactive • Community engagement • Break down silos • Track results, not activities • Make local governments cool	• Better service delivery • Innovative to respond to change • Efficiency for funding/resources • Value for residents • Making local government a choice profession

Build meaningful long-term connections to create an intentionally connected community	• Reduce surprises in service and operations
	• Follow through and build trust with our communities
	• Find opportunities to share best practices
		• Create a communications toolkit with:
		  o Standards, best practices, and certification
		  o Appropriate resources for a continuum of local government sizes and types
		  o Inclusive storytelling
		  o On-going dialogue
		  o Follow-up
			• Rebuild public trust and combat misinformation
			• Humanize and empower staff for the long-term health of the profession
			• Build resilient and inclusive communities

Jurisdiction B

Jurisdiction B was comprised of participants from local governments west of the Mississippi River, from the Great Plains to the West Coast. Each participant was asked to introduce themselves, share a key takeaway from the morning's activities, and share the top challenges that they would like to spend their time addressing. Potential challenges to address included:

- Antiquated and unfit systems
- Cybersecurity and data privacy
- An exclusive culture of governance
- Misinformation
- Current workforce lacks capacity, support, and trust
- Technological literacy (the "Digital Divide") and preferences for digital services

Ultimately, the three challenges that the group elected to focus on were:

- Antiquated and unfit systems
- An exclusive culture of governance
- Current workforce lacks capacity, support, and trust

Challenge: Antiquated & Unfit Systems

Initial brainstorming and conversation related to systems challenges is shown in the graphic map below.
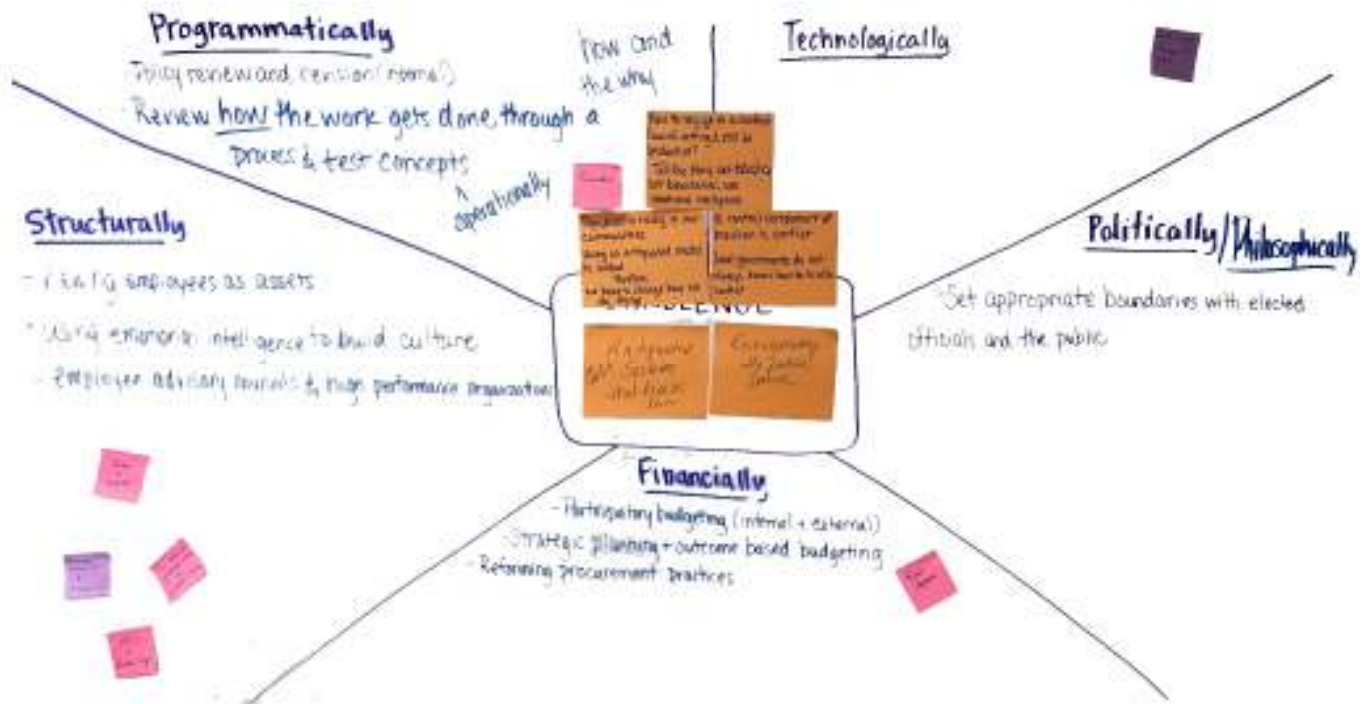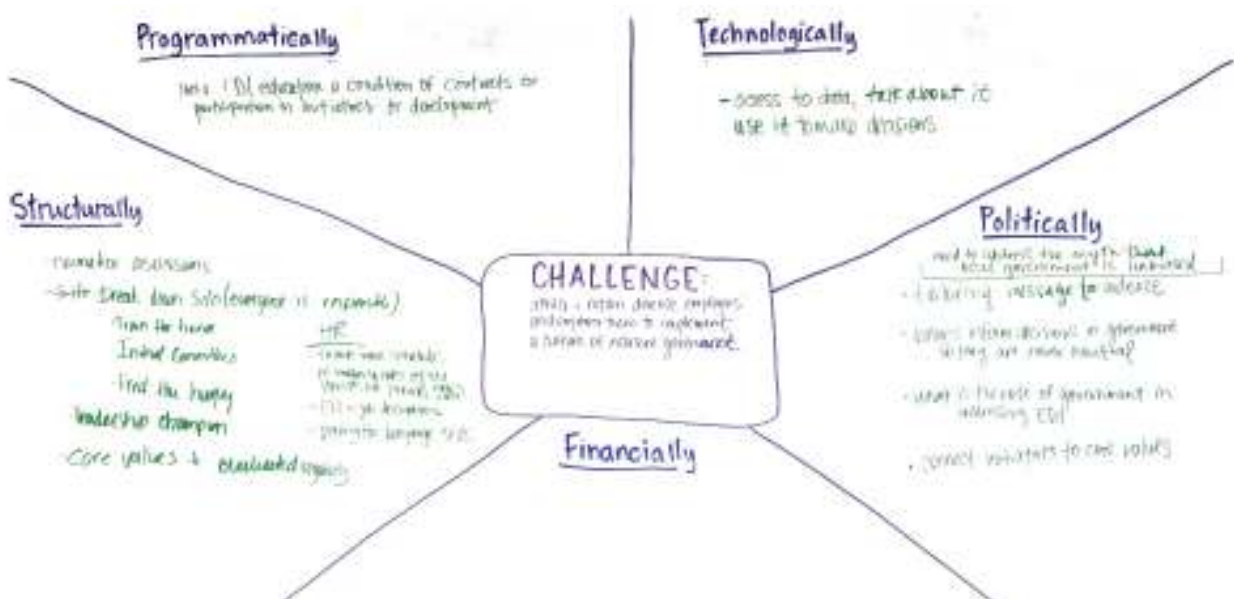

The subgroup identified three focus areas:

- Budgeting
- Service delivery
- Organizational culture and community engagement

For each of the focus areas, participants were asked to share what the proposed initiative is and why it is important to advancing local government.

Initiative	What?	Why?
Strategic & Participatory Budgeting	• Community engagement • Diversity, equity, and inclusion • Outcome-based budgeting • Leadership listening • Transparency	• Builds community trust • Ensures distinct community voices are included in shaping budget priorities • Increases transparency and civic awareness
Proactively Reviewing the "Why" and "How" of Service Delivery	• Continuous improvement • Sunsetting outdated policies and testing new concepts	• Foster continuous evaluation and improvement of service delivery • Experiment with new concepts – fail forward
The Art of Public Service: Using Emotional Intelligence for Organizational Culture and Community Engagement	• Communication and storytelling • Collaboration • Leadership listening and empathy • People-centric policies and practices	• Overcome community misunderstandings/misperceptions of local government • Builds trust by humanizing government and its employees • Promotes value of public service

Challenge: An Exclusive Culture of Governance

Initial brainstorming and conversation related to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) challenges is shown in the graphic map below.
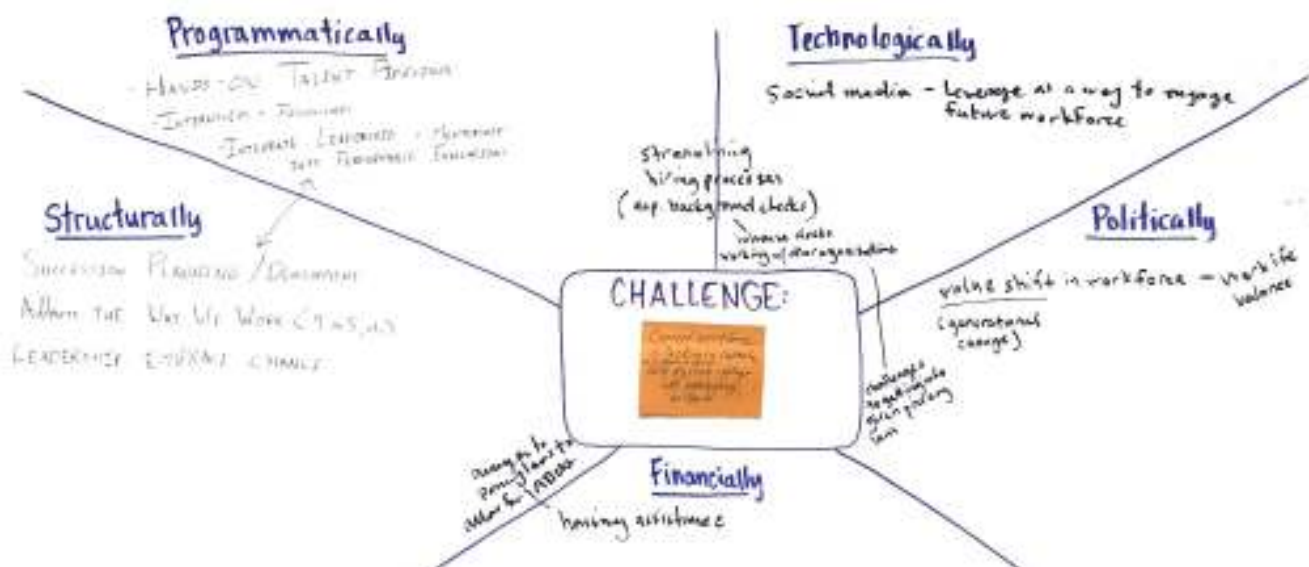
The subgroup identified three focus areas:
- Responsibility for EDI
- Advancing EDI internally and externally
- Barriers to equitable participation and governance

For each of the focus areas, participants were asked to share what the proposed initiative is, and why it is important to advancing local government.

Initiative	What?	Why?
EDI is not a Position – It is Everyone's Job	• Break down silos • Train the trainer • Equity-based continuous improvement • Leadership to champion	• Change must come from within and be embedded across the organization • Fundamental obligation of all employees to uphold EDI principles
Incorporate EDI as a Condition for Participation or Partnership	• Rewrite contracts • EDI as a condition for bidders/contractors • Update building/development codes • Identify community organizations which are doing this work	• Government should be an EDI leader and use its platform to advance inclusivity in the community
Culturally Informed Initiatives	• Framework for culturally informed decision-making • Data collection and analysis, cross-cultural analytics • Accessible community engagement • Partnerships with community organizations	• Equity driven outcomes • Community resilience • Fostering participation of all communities • Trust-building

Challenge: Current Workforce Lacks Capacity, Support, and Trust

Initial brainstorming and conversation related to workforce challenges is shown in the graphic map below.

The subgroup identified three focus areas:
- Appealing Work Environment
- Hiring Process
- Leadership Development

For each of the focus areas, participants were asked to share what the proposed initiative is, and why it is important to advancing local government.

Initiative	What?	Why?
Reframe Local Government as a Choice Employer	• Cultures of belonging • Employee support programs • Holistic and innovative benefits	• Must be able to attract and retain top talent • Inspire future generations • Empower employees to make change
Streamline the Hiring Process	• In-house background checks • Coordination of information sharing • Decentralized hiring • Leverage technologies • Standardized forms and processes	• Currently losing preferred candidates during hiring process • Improve experience for hiring managers • Time to fill vacant positions must be shorter
Integrated Leadership Programming	• Leadership development opportunities • Succession planning • Department-preferred training opportunities	• Employee empowerment, retention • Sustainable culture and institutional knowledge due to promoting from within

Actions to Move Forward

After reviewing each of the nine actions proposed by the sub-groups, all Delegates in Jurisdiction B were polled to identify the three that they would dig into further. The top three actions selected were:
- The Art of Public Service: Using Emotional Intelligence for Organizational Culture and Community Engagement
- Reframe Local Government as a Choice Employer
- Culturally Informed Initiatives

For each action, the subgroups spent time further clarifying what the activity would be, how the activities impact all disciplines in local government, and why it matters for all communities.

Initiative	What?	How?	Why?
The Art of Public Service: Using Emotional Intelligence for Organizational Culture and Community Engagement	• Fundamental misunderstanding between local governments and communities • Cannot solve for inequities because community perspectives are not fully understood	• Prioritize development of soft skills across all disciplines • Get public employees to think like the community they serve • Test concepts, fail forward	• Work is influential on the lives of residents • Mutual understanding aids effectiveness and reduces conflict

Initiative	What?	How?	Why?
Reframe Local Government as a Choice Employer	• Cultures of belonging • Meaningful work • Innovative benefits • Incorporate into promotional process/on-boarding • Budget planning • On-boarding/mentorship/orientation	• Provide innovative, inclusive, and flexible workplace practices and opportunities • Illustrate local government's impact and importance	• Must be able to attract and retain top talent • Inspire future generations • Empower employees to make change
Culturally Informed Initiatives	• Framework for culturally informed decision-making • Data collection and analysis, cross-cultural analytics • Accessible community engagement	• Partnerships with community organizations • Data-informed decision-making • Accountability reporting • Multi-cultural stakeholder groups • Storytelling	• Equity driven outcomes • Community resilience • Fostering participation of all communities, especially historically marginalized/excluded • Trust-building

Jurisdiction C

Jurisdiction C was comprised of participants who were generally from county-level governments across the United States. Each participant was asked to introduce themselves, share a key takeaway from the morning's activities, and share the top challenges that they would like to spend their time addressing. Ultimately, the three challenges that the group elected to focus on were:

- Recruiting and retaining the workforce
- Evolving community engagement
- Process improvement and innovation

Challenge: Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Initial brainstorming and conversation related to recruiting and retaining the workforce is shown in the graphic map below.
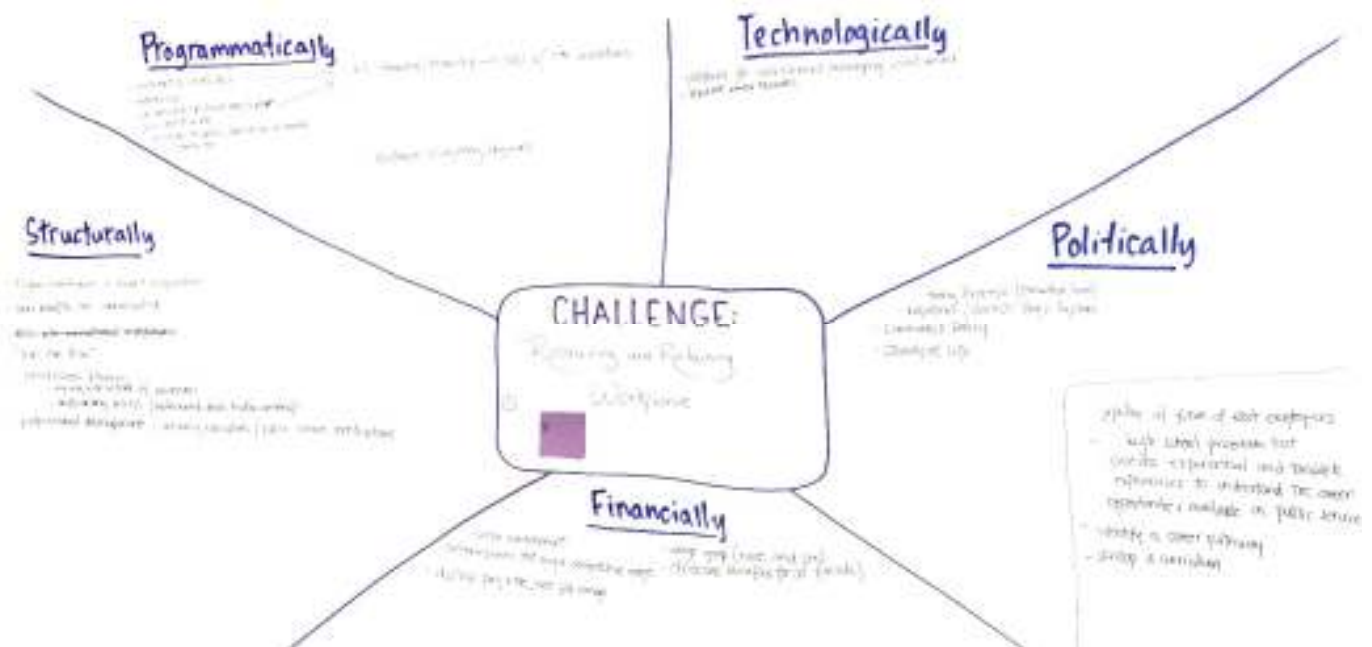
The subgroup identified three focus areas:

- Employee sustainability
- Justice-impacted workforce
- Future of government (FOG) fellowship

For each of the focus areas, participants were asked to share what the proposed initiative is and why it is important to advancing local government.

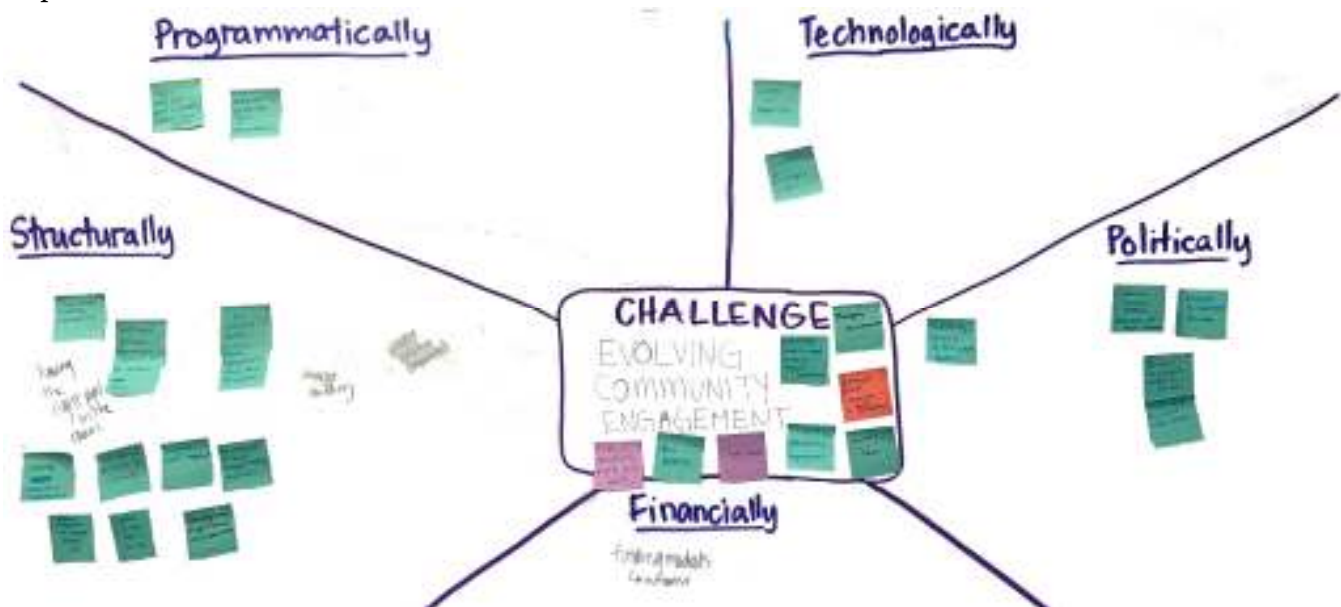| Initiative	What?	Why?
Employee Sustainability	- Professional development/public service motivation - Succession planning and intentional hiring - More streamlined hiring process - Employee benefits (childcare, tuition reimbursement) - Wage gap (race and sex) – pay transparency - Hybrid work environment - Platforms for advancement/leveraging social media	- To mitigate or eliminate the levels of attrition in governments - Employees are not only concerned about the welfare of their jurisdictions, but are often more concerned about the wellbeing of themselves and their families
Justice-Impacted Workforce	- Create opportunities for justice-impacted individuals to enter local government - Ban the box - Identify positions within the organization where their record will not negatively impact their productivity and contribution	- Many well-qualified individuals are blocked from public service because of prior criminal offenses - Overlooking minor criminal offenses (and even decriminalizing some) will open the pool of qualified applicants available for hire
Future of Government Fellowship	- Intentional curriculum development to engage and encourage students to enter careers in public service - Captive audience with every cohort addressed - On-site experience with different departments	- Develop a pipeline of talent early in their careers - Provide exposure to career opportunities - Changing workforce

Challenge: Evolving Community Engagement

Initial brainstorming and conversation related to evolving community engagement challenges is shown in the graphic map below.
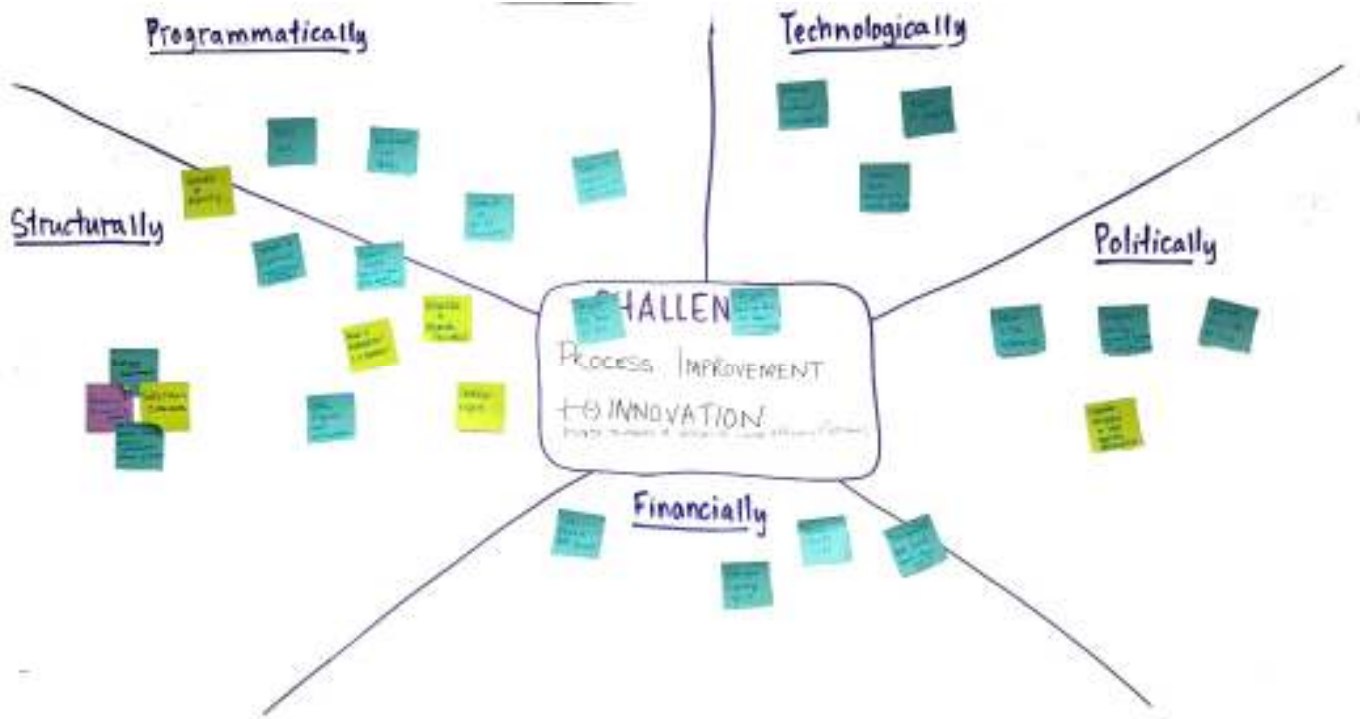
The subgroup identified three focus areas:

- Transformative model of community engagement
- Hire the right people
- Financial reallocation

For each of the focus areas, participants were asked to share what the proposed initiative is, and why it is important to advancing local government.

Initiative	What?	Why?
Transformative Model of Community Engagement	• Develop a conceptual framework, examples, and guides for local governments to modify and implement for their communities	• Many departments do not have skills, time, or political/organizational support to spearhead the effort alone. Without it we often repeat processes and fall back on what was done before. • Requires time, training, expenses to address multiple disciplines and reach residents where they are at
Hire the Right People	• Identify empathetic cultural workers (inside the organization) • Prioritize community engagement for all departments (everyone's' responsibility)	• Important step towards trust building and demystifying government structures, sources, etc. • Cross-department engagement • Educating the public on government services, roles/responsibilities
Financial Reallocation	• Reallocate money that is not being put to good use – e.g., nonprofit grant opportunities • Pay members of the public for their time during the engagement process	• To enable these organizations to effectively engage the community through these services • Compensation is motivation for members of the public for their time

Challenge: Process Improvement and Innovation

Initial brainstorming and conversation related to process improvement and innovation challenges is shown in the graphic map below.

The subgroup identified three focus areas:

- Intergovernmental collaborative process
- Citizen-driven GIS/local improvements
- Reimagining public procurement

For each of the focus areas, participants were asked to share what the proposed initiative is, and why it is important to advancing local government.

Initiative	What?	Why?
Intergovernmental Collaborative Process	• Too many silos result in duplicative processes within the same region • Build in feedback and evaluation into all programmatic processes • Sharing of process data among departments and governments • Asset mapping – documenting similar programs and resources • Evaluating assets for possible collaboration and consolidation	• Increase efficiency of programs • Integrate best practices into project execution • Cost savings that can be reinvested

Initiative	What?	Why?
Citizen-driven GIS/Local Improvements	• Develop online portal for citizen submission of issues like potholes • Open data • Tags for specific departments so submissions are immediately sent to staff • Helps to prioritize community interests and need to fix or improve assets • Track fix/completion dates in open data portal	• People get invested in "their" project or community need • Staff can use direct feedback to re-route resources and meet constituent requests • Over time use additional data to modify staffing and resource deployment
Reimagining Public Procurement	• Hard to do business for local government, especially for small, BIPOC, veteran, or female owned businesses • There are often % goals for construction, but what about operating? • Collaborate across jurisdictions to make it easier to register	• More time/money for a more effective and equitable process may be worth it • What are existing processes designed to protect us from? Are there other methods that are less inefficient/more equitable?

Actions to Move Forward

After reviewing each of the nine actions proposed by the sub-groups, all Delegates in Jurisdiction C were polled to identify the three that they would dig into further. The table below shows the poll results.

Initiative	Votes
Challenge: Recruiting and Retaining Workforce	
• Employee Sustainability	2
• Justice-Impacted Workforce	9
• Future of Government (FOG) Fellowship	3
Challenge: Evolving Community Engagement	
• Transformative Model of Community Engagement	7
• Hire the Right People	2
• Financial Reallocation	2
Challenge: Process Improvement and Innovation	
• Intergovernmental Collaborative Process	0
• Citizen-Driven GIS/Local Improvements	3
• Reimagining Public Procurement	8

After further discussion and refinement, the final three actions were:
• Promised Pathways
• Transferring Power to the Community
• Innovative community investment

For each action, the subgroups spent time further clarifying what the activity would be, how the activities impact all disciplines in local government, and why it matters for all communities.

Initiative	What?	How?	Why?
Promised Pathways	• Supporting justice-impacted individuals and their families through employment opportunities in the public sector.	• Creating employment opportunities across departments from an available talent pool through promised pathways • Different access points to all departments, not just entry level • Breaking down barriers by creating holistic pathways • Create local ordinances • Codifying policies to include private sector • Recruitment and support • Retention and promotion	• Racial equity • Repair harm and build trust • Workforce development to address high vacancies in local government • Reinvest and reallocate resources • Positively impact the quality of life for the individual, family, and community
Transferring Power to the Community	• Developing a conceptual framework, examples, and guides for local government community engagement, including identifying different types of community	• Tools • Framework • Continuing education opportunities • Strengthening community ties to affiliates and NGOs	• Shared responsibility • Build trust • Give voice to the silent majority • Better use of resources • Engender a sense of belonging • Building social capital • Support positive governmental services

Jurisdiction C shared their innovative community investment action through the following graphic:

Defining the Future

After reconvening, each of the Jurisdictions presented their discussions and their three proposed actions. The full list of proposed actions included:

- Jurisdiction A
  - o GROW Your Own Workforce
  - o Committing to Innovation Through Continuous Improvement
  - o Build meaningful long-term connections to create an intentionally connected community
- Jurisdiction B
  - o The Art of Public Service: Using Emotional Intelligence for Organizational Culture and Community Engagement
  - o Reframe Local Government as a Choice Employer
  - o Culturally Informed Initiatives
- Jurisdiction C
  - o Promised Pathways
  - o Transferring Power to the Community
  - o Innovative Community Investment

Recognizing several connections between the different proposed action items, Delegates who worked on similar actions were grouped to work through whether it made more sense for actions to remain distinct or to be combined. Through this process, the nine actions were reduced to the following five:

- GROW a Resilient Workforce
- People-powered and culturally informed continuous improvement
- The Art of Public Service – The Communication Continuum
- Promised Pathways
- Innovative community investment/rethinking public procurement

Delegates were asked to select their top actions to move forward, as captured in the following graphic.

Actions to Move Forward

1. GROW a Resilient Workforce
2. People-powered and culturally informed continuous improvement
3. The Art of Public Service – The Communication Continuum
4. Promised Pathways
5. Innovative Community Investment (procurement)

Based on the top three actions selected, Delegates and Super Delegates were invited to three rooms to conduct initial implementation planning.

Implementation Planning: GROW a Resilient Workforce

The GROW a Resilient Workforce group identified its challenges/barriers, resources required, and three bold steps, as shown in the graphic below.

Resources

- Educational and vocational partnerships
- Money
- Professional organizations
    - SHRM
    - IPMA-HR
    - ELGL
    - ICMA
- Veteran Employees
- HR
- Consultants
- Technology and virtual reality
- Advertising
- Community engagement
- Community leaders
- Developers

Challenges and Barriers

- Resistance to change/status quo
- HR
- Budgets/finances
- Values
- Politics
- Legal considerations
- Bureaucracy
- Unions
- Misperceptions of public service
- Employee buy-in
- Patriarchy
- Private sector competition

Bold Steps

1. Recruit
   - Partner with educational institutions to create a talent pipeline
   - Increase exposure to local government careers
   - Develop model employment policies for public entities in all 50 states
   - Comprehensive benefits reviews
   - Flexible government jobs with remote work
   - Define work requirements
2. Develop
   - Creation of desk manuals and SOPs
   - Career training and pathways
   - Create office culture committees from each department
   - Mandatory emotional intelligence and bias training
3. Retain
   - Wage equity
   - Empowerment through flatter hierarchies
   - Increase leave benefits
   - Reduced cost or onsite daycare
   - Flexible work schedules

Implementation Planning: Promised Pathways

The Promised Pathways group identified its challenges/barriers, resources required, and three bold steps, as shown in the graphic below.
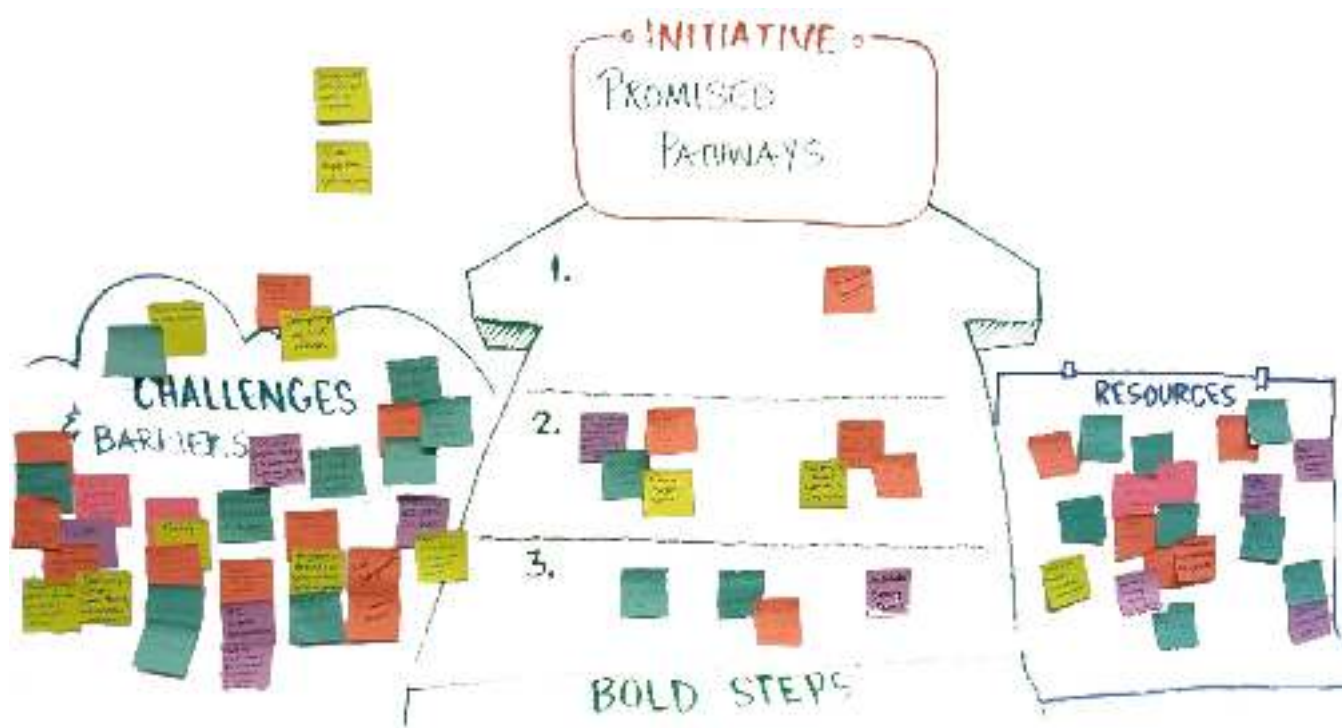
Resources

- Equipment/tools to build skills sets in prison – receive accreditation
- Workforce centers
- Innocence Project
- Model City programs
- Non-governmental organizations
- AmeriCorps
- Further education programs
- Department directors
- Social Services/Human Services
- United States Public Health Service
- Public Safety
    - Police
    - Fire
    - Probation offices
    - Courts
    - Jails
    - Sheriffs
- Business owners
- Local ordinances (marijuana, background checks, etc.)
- Existing body of research

Challenges and Barriers

- Stigma
- Existing legislation
- Authority variation by state/county
- Background checks and hiring practices
- Influx of new people to be processed – HR not growing their staff support
- Business Association pushback
- Engaging with private prisons that may not be motivated to partner
- Service demands
  - Transitional services
  - Wraparound services
  - Workforce training programs
- Risk management
- Insurance claims
- Resource-intensiveness and lack of funding
- Public perception and fear
- Political resistance

Bold Steps

1. Decriminalize Marijuana
2. Provide More Resources for Families
   - When someone is incarcerated, identify the gaps that creates in the family and provide resources
   - Wraparound support and therapy
   - Community engagement inside jails/prisons
   - Substantially fund apprenticeships/internships
   - Start training people in jail
   - Prepare/equip incarcerated people to integrate into the professional world
3. Enact Legislative Changes
   - Eliminate background checks
   - Have a national convening of local governments on this issue
   - Advocate for legislative change
   - Automatic expungement of records

Implementation Planning: The Art of Public Service – The Communication Continuum

The Communication Continuum group identified its challenges/barriers, resources required, and three bold steps, as shown in the graphic below.

Resources

- Executive buy-in
- Money/funded budget
- Positivity to share
- Partner organizations (validity, content, platform)
- Website to host forum and resource materials
- A good definition of emotional intelligence
- Universities and academics
- Education systems
- Case studies of success
- Strong communicators
- Colleges and Universities
- Successful neighborhood organizations
- Organizations that excel at storytelling
- Professional development organizations (e.g., Raftelis)
- Existing professional organization toolkits
- Third-party developers

Challenges and Barriers

- Fear of embracing the emotional
- Lack of prioritization of soft skills
- Staff skills
- Fear of not controlling the message
- Elected official priorities
- Apolitical mindset of public managers
- Political transitions
- The "Government is a secret" mentality
- Elected officials
- Language
- Medium used to communicate
- Proximity to the community
- Language barriers
- Staff time
- Belief that humanization creates unfair or unequal processes
- Lack of council buy-in
- Addressing various forms of government
- Prohibitive municipal code or personnel policies
- No established goals or metrics for success
- Sometimes you don't have an "answer"
- People don't think that it's "new" or "important"
- Different levels – some communities have nothing, some are more advanced

Bold Steps

1. Understand and assess the landscape (governmental and non-governmental)
2. Engage potential partners and define the theory of impact
3. Determine how to scale and adopt the toolkit broadly

Closing and Commitments

As the Local Government 2030 Convening came to a close, each Delegate and Super Delegate was asked to share their commitment for the future or a parting thought.

Delegate Commitments

Delegate commitments are captured in the following image.

- Relay initiatives to my organization and find my allies
- Prioritizing the work amidst all the things I have to do
- I will be bold and kind in my pursuit of bettering our workforce
- Advocating for bold ideas, taking risks, moving our profession forward, challenging the red tape, staying connected with my colleagues, doing things differently, and being persistent
- Support our initiative with research, coordination, and advocacy, and bring the collaborative vibes back to my organization

- Stay in touch with the many amazing people I met this weekend
- I commit to continue with drive and passion until I don't hear NO
- Begin to foster working relationships between departments and open lines of communication
- I commit to participate and infuse new ideas learned within my sphere of influence
- Being the two-year-old in the room and always asking why
- To not lose sight of the work we have done and the work we have left to do
- Staying involved and dedicated to furthering the cause
- I commit to following through on the efforts to establish our initiative and to keep the energy and momentum of this weekend
- Always keeping equity, inclusion, and community at the front of mind in what we do
- I commit to taking our initiatives back to my locality and being an advocate for all of them
- I commit to being fully involved as co-chair for the remainder of the process
- Engaging intentionally and fully in the fulfillment of our theories of change and throughout, balancing taking space and ceding space for advancement toward greater equity in public administration
- Self-education and research – you need to know where you're from to know where you're going; commit to DEI focus, regardless of initiative
- I commit to stepping into every space I work in with an open mind and to leave it fuller than I found it
- I commit to approach this work with passion, curiosity, and intentionality. I will support my team and our work, serving as a liaison for the priorities set here today.
- I commit to staying connected
- Continue to provide my time and expertise to further my team's initiative
- I'm committed to supporting my fellow delegates
- I commit to speaking up in my community, sharing my opinion boldly, and living the work we discussed this weekend!
- Serve as co-leader for the initiative; remain positive, encouraging, and open for all delegates
- I commit to building leadership opportunities and pathways in my organization
- I commit to advocate for disenfranchised communities and promote our initiatives in my workplace and beyond
- I commit to staying engaged and bringing awareness to our initiatives within my professional network
- Always be an organization and community donor
- Tell/carry forward the STORY of this time and push for clarity to ensure bold and transformative action
- Become the Chief Disagreer (The Villain)
- Continue serving my community diligently and help bring the government closer to the people!
- Start a conversation with ACM on how to grow a resilient workforce by creating a presentation with research regarding "Initiative" as it pertains to our community
- Support my team to the best of my abilities and make sure we all have a good time
- I commit to share the work and experiences of this Convening to my community, network, and family
- I commit to communication (do not go ghost) and to stay connected
- Dedicate a portion of personal time to my team's project and proselytize the contact
- I commit to working with my team to ensure work towards our final goal (initiative)
- Give everything I can while not overextending professionally or emotionally
- Re-think how financial information can be presented to the public
- To be a champion for the Convening and to start having important/difficult conversations with my colleagues
- I'm committed to staying engaged and present in the process of developing the future of local government, with this delegation and beyond

- I commit to creating a safe space in my HR/Administration Department and being a safe ear for my team
- Turning challenges into opportunities
- To bring back initiatives that weren't selected for implementation in my organization, to stay connected to the people I've met here, and work to break barriers between organizations
- Being accountable to the group and process
- I commit to challenging the status quo to become an effective champion for our projects here
- Be consistent in service of others; time, energy, passion
- I commit to not backing down from thinking big and BOLD
- Push the boundaries of what I can accomplish in my community

Parting Thoughts from Super Delegates

- Thank you for inspiring me. You brought your head and heart, and your passion has come through in how you serve your community. The future is bright, and I want to build it with you.
- Sincere gratitude – it's awesome to see and feel and move forward in creating a multi-racial democracy with a true governance model.
- I worked on a project on social equity with APA in 1980s. You guys are the generation we were hoping for. You don't have to be told what this is or why it's important. I couldn't be prouder and more hopeful that we have this orbit of people. I can't wait to see what comes next, and I have so much faith in the future
- Coming in here – I was like, I can retire anytime. Now I don't want to.
- Good job to the public safety group – sometimes it's hard to integrate for us. Heart and pride – don't forget that part of this weekend and look for those things when you're back.
- Don't let this be the end of your journey. You're just getting ramped up, and I agree – the future is bright.
- It's always fascinating to watch bright people do fascinating work. The work of getting this done will be done at your behest, but through the professional associations. Get engaged and get involved in those associations. If you want to see this work in the profession, we need to start knocking on doors and getting all those people involved. We need them to help create the future we want to see.
- Never say never after you walk out of this room. Challenge the no and keep asking why. I'm so happy to know everyone, and a shoutout to my finance team and larger group. I'm inspired. A mentor of mine, a long time ago, was discouraged because people didn't want to be in public service. He got pens printed and started handing them out. "I'm a government official and I'm proud of it." I still have the pen and I'm still proud of it.
- Shout-out to administrative services. I started in public service at 29 and had a different lens. As you become more vested in a government, there's less incentive to rock the boat. Don't drink the bureaucratic Kool-Aid. Keep coming back and looking at ways to shake things up.
- As the host from Omaha, I'm so grateful that you're here. As someone who teaches local government finance, this is so inspiring. The challenge for us, in this space, is we're seeing a migration of people who want to have an impact moving to non-profits. This is the right space, and we need to get that message out.
- Thank you all so much. When we put this out, we didn't know how it would be received. It seemed to resonate and flow in the functional areas. I'm committed to staying engaged and my organization is a resource to you. You've signed your name for more than a year, and I for one am feeling energized.
- When people ask me what I do, I say I'm in the democracy business. And we're all in the democracy business. What we talked about this weekend keeps that democratic tradition going. I hope you all take from this the importance and gravity of that situation. Future generations also need to say that they want to step up and help the communities. We have to work together – if we don't, democracy is in peril. On behalf of

all of those who came together, concerned about local democracy, thank you. You have the support of many, both in and out of this room. Thank you for coming to Omaha.

The Three Bold Steps

Each participant signed the following image, committing to following through with the Three Bold Steps from the weekend's \