North Carolina local government enjoys a reputation for professional management. All the state’s 100 counties and most of its cities and towns of more than 5,000 people have the council-manager or council-administrator form of government. Further, many municipalities with less than 5,000 people also have town managers or administrators. North Carolina also is known for excellent financial management of local government. It is characterized by effective budgeting, accounting that meets generally accepted accounting principles, innovative yet sound capital financing, and forward-looking financial planning. These characteristics, coupled with oversight of local finance by the state’s Local Government Commission, explain why North Carolina’s cities and counties generally have more favorable bond ratings than cities and counties in almost any other state.

North Carolina’s city and county managers, finance officers, and budget officials play central roles in ensuring quality local government in the state. Some also are making notable contributions nationally, serving on the national executive boards of their respective professional organizations. Their achievements reflect the contributions that North Carolina’s city and county managers, finance officers, and budget officials have made to local government and to their respective professions.

Managers on the ICMA Executive Board

Three North Carolina officials currently (as of this writing) serve on the executive board of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA): Bryce A. (Bill) Stuart, manager of Winston-Salem; J. Thomas Lundy, manager of Catawba County; and Carolyn H. Carter, assistant manager of Raleigh. The ICMA seeks to further professional management in cities, counties, and other local governments. Most of its members serve in local units with the council-manager form of government. North Carolina has more representation on the twenty-member ICMA executive board than any other state.

Stuart serves on the executive board as a past president of the organization (1998–99). He was president of the North Carolina City/County Management Association in 1988 and chaired the Host Committee for the national ICMA conference in Charlotte that year. In addition, he served on the ICMA executive board from 1993 to 1995 and chaired the Program Planning Committee for the 1985 national conference. Stuart has been manager of Winston-Salem since 1980. Earlier, he was assistant manager and budget director in Charlotte. During his tenure as Winston-Salem’s manager, the city has won numerous national honors—for example, the Public Technology, Inc. Leadership Award in 1996.

Stuart also has worked internationally, consulting under U.S. Agency for International Development contracts with local officials in Mbabane and Manzini, Swaziland, and Arequipa, Peru.

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He received a B.S. in public administration from the University of Southern California in 1964.

Lundy is one of two southeast regional vice-presidents for the ICMA. Previously he served on numerous ICMA committees—for example, the Strategic Planning Committee. He is a past president of the National Association of County Administrators and of the North Carolina City/County Management Association. In the latter position, he led the successful effort to publish a ninth-grade text, Local Government in North Carolina.

Lundy has been manager of Catawba County since 1979. Before that he was the county’s assistant manager. Under his leadership, Catawba County has gained recognition for program and managerial accomplishments. For example, he and other county staff earned the Ralph W. Ketner Productivity Award and national recognition for the county’s outcome-oriented budget system.

Lundy has participated in ICMA international exchange programs in Australia, Ireland, and Japan. He holds a B.A. from Emory and Henry College (in Emory, Virginia) and an M.P.A. from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Further, he is a graduate of the Senior Executives Program at the John F. Kennedy School of Harvard University.

Carter also is a southeast regional vice-president of ICMA. She was president of the North Carolina City/County Management Association in 1992–93. Also, she chaired that association’s Civic Education Committee in the early and mid 1990s, playing a key role in the development of the ninth-grade text Local Government in North Carolina and companion lesson plans for elementary school students.

Carter has been Raleigh’s assistant manager for operations since 1984. During her tenure, the city has gained a reputation for efficient and effective public services. She led the city’s award-winning program for comprehensive solid waste management, and she chaired the Raleigh—Wake County Emergency Communications Board, which oversees a consolidated 911 center serving 11 local governments and 51 public safety agencies. Carter recently served as interim city manager after the retirement of the city manager. Before going to Raleigh, she was assistant manager and budget director in Durham.

Carter earned her B.A. from Meredith College, her M.A. from Wake Forest University, and her M.P.A. from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Finance Officers on the GFOA Executive Board

Three North Carolina officials now serve or have recently served on the executive board of the Government Finance Officers Association of the U.S. and Canada (GFOA): Elizabeth (Betsy) D. Wilson, finance director of Lenoir; William P. (Pat) Pate, assistant city manager of High Point; and J. Harry Weatherly, finance director of Mecklenburg County. The GFOA seeks to improve budgeting, accounting, and financial management in state and local government. Its members are mostly officials with important financial roles at these levels of government.

Currently a member of the executive board, Wilson earlier served the national GFOA in other capacities: state representative to the national organization; member of the Governmental Budgeting and Management Committee and the Governmental Accounting, Auditing, and Financial Reporting Committee; and chair of the Women’s Public Finance Network.

Wilson’s contributions to the local government finance community in North Carolina have been great. She served as president of the state GFOA in 1981–82. In 1988 she chaired the committee that recommended the North Carolina Local Government Finance Officers Certification Program, and she has chaired the committee that administers that program since its inception. The program has extensive training and rigorous examination requirements and has achieved national recognition. Wilson also served on the executive board of the North Carolina League of Municipalities for two terms in the late 1990s.

Wilson has been finance director of Lenoir since 1970. Throughout her tenure the city has maintained a reputation for strong financial management. She has an associate degree in business from the Women’s College of North Carolina (now The University of North Carolina at Greensboro).

Pate was recently voted president-elect of the GFOA, to serve as president in 2002–03. Before earning that honor, he was on the organization’s Governmental Budget Committee, its Management and Debt Committee, and its executive board. On the Governmental Budget Committee, he played an important role in reviewing GFOA–recommended budget practices and a framework for improved state and local budgeting. These practices and the framework were put forward by the National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting, in which the GFOA played a central role.
Pate became assistant manager of High Point in 1999. Before taking that position, he was Greensboro’s budget and evaluation director for nearly ten years. In High Point, Pate manages eight departments and is responsible for city capital planning. In Greensboro he established the city’s Budget and Evaluation Department, won GFOA “outstanding” designations for Greensboro’s budget in 1994 and 1996, and managed the city’s strategic planning process in the late 1990s. Pate was president of the North Carolina Local Government Budget Association in 1993–94. He holds both a B.A. and an M.P.A. from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

A member of the GFOA executive board from 1995 to 1998, Weatherly also served on the GFOA Cash Management Committee from 1988 to 1998. His state-level contributions include service as president of the North Carolina County Finance Officers Association in 1989–90, chair of the Large City/County Finance Officers Committee since 1990, and chair of the County Finance Officers Legislative Committee for various years since 1985.

Weatherly has served as finance director of Mecklenburg County since 1984, and before taking that position, he was the county’s accounting manager. He has managed Mecklenburg County’s finances in a fiscally sound and innovative way, focusing special attention on raising capital funds to support the county’s rapid growth and on preserving and strengthening the county’s AAA bond rating.

Besides managing financial operations, Weatherly oversees the county’s risk management and city-county tax collection functions. Also, he is county liaison to the joint Charlotte/Mecklenburg County Purchasing Department, and he has oversight responsibility for the county’s industrial development financing program.

A CPA, Weatherly has a B.S. in business administration from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He served in Vietnam and was awarded an Army Commendation Medal for Valor.

Manager on Board of Innovation Groups

Hickory’s manager, B. Gary McGee, has taken a somewhat different but no less notable route in making professional contributions at the national level. McGee sits on the board of directors of the Innovation Groups, a national association of local government managers and other officials that sponsors research and development to identify and implement new and improved ways to provide local public services. He served as chair of the Carolinas Innovation Group in 1996–97.

McGee also has been active in the state ICMA and has served on the board of directors of the North Carolina League of Municipalities. Further, he cochairs the North Carolina Local Government Performance Measurement Project, which has received national recognition for fostering improved local services.

As Hickory’s manager (since 1984), McGee has facilitated a successful strategic planning program that involves numerous citizen task forces in identifying long-term community needs. Earlier he was manager of Watauga County for seven years and of Pittsboro for three years.

McGee holds a B.A. from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an M.P.A. from North Carolina State University. He credits Donald Hayman, Institute of Government professor emeritus, with motivating him to undertake a career in local government management.

Conclusion

All these officials have long tenures in local government. They have earned the confidence of the elected officials and staff with whom they have worked, and they have records of solid and innovative accomplishment.

Numerous other North Carolina managers, finance officers, and budget officials have served their local jurisdictions with great competence and have made important professional contributions statewide and nationally to the ICMA, the GFOA, the Innovation Groups, and other professional associations. The state’s history of local government professionalism and service suggests that many more will do so in the future.

Notes


2. Bond ratings provide one indication of North Carolina local governments’ good reputation for financial management. For example, of the fifty-one cities and counties across the nation that had AAA ratings from Standard & Poor’s Corporation in September 1998, nine were in North Carolina. (This information was included in a handout that Standard & Poor’s staff used in making a presentation on North Carolina bond ratings at a conference of North Carolina local government finance officers in August 1998.)