

Award for Career Development in Memory of L. P. Cookingham

Each year, ICMA presents the Award for Career Development to a corporate member who has made a significant contribution to the development of new talent in professional local government management. The award commemorates former ICMA President L. P. (Perry) Cookingham, who is credited with creating the local government internship. Robert C. Bobb, city manager of Richmond, Virginia, is the recipient of this year's Cookingham Award.

Robert Bobb's career spans two-and-a-half decades of management and leadership in the public and private sectors. In each of the cities he has served—which include

Kalamazoo, Michigan; Santa Ana, California; and Richmond, Virginia—Mr. Bobb has distinguished himself in the areas of public finance, economic development, and public safety.

Mr. Bobb has been successful for so long and in such disparate environments because he has learned that the most effective workforce is one that is invested with trust, faith, and guidance. He models the ideals of hard work and commitment to public service and provides ample opportunities for others to learn. Through structured programs and informal associations, he consistently has served as a mentor for anyone expressing a desire to be a leader in the local government arena.

Mr. Bobb strives to provide opportunities for all employees, from executive secretary to assistant manager, to reach their potential. His style of supervision is marked by constant encouragement and the challenge to exceed traditional definitions of excellence. One former em-



Robert C. Bobb

ployee, who is currently a city manager, served as an executive secretary until Mr. Bobb suggested and then supported her efforts at career development.

Her efforts culminated in the woman earning her

MPA and completing post-graduate work at Harvard University. She explains,

“ . . . most of us who worked for [Mr. Bobb] recognized and respected that he challenged us to exceed all traditional expectations of excellence. His approach to leadership afforded many of us opportunities that we likely would not have found in other environments. Those of us who worked for him and went on with our careers as city managers acknowledge that we are better managers as a result.”

Throughout the past 21 years, Robert Bobb has positively influenced and encouraged a number of other practicing public administrators who have found success and professional gratification as professional local government managers. His commitment to mentoring and developing his staff has contributed to better governance—not only of the communities he serves, but also of the many communities that have been served by his protégés.