



ICMA AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT 1924 to Now to The Future

A whitepaper that (1) explores the past and present portfolio of ICMA's international activities, and (2) sets the stage for a larger conversation about a global transformation of the association.

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Message from the ICMA Executive Director

ICMA has been internationally engaged for decades. As you will read in the paragraphs and pages that follow, ICMA has been active in promoting good governance worldwide through grant-funded technical assistance in dozens of countries for more than thirty years. We have engaged with leaders of municipalities through international affiliate organizations; hosted international board meetings and conferences; provided scholarship and fellowship opportunities allowing members to travel abroad and to come to the United States for enriched learning in our local communities. In three years on the job, I have travelled to many global locations to showcase ICMA and promote good governance from Australia to India; Palestine to the Dominican Republic.

ICMA has and continues to do very impressive work through U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and U.S. Department of State (DOS) funded activities. Similarly, our engagement activities with international affiliates and members, while small in number, provide connectivity to people in positions similar to those in the United States. ***Despite this success, it can be argued that while “international” is the first word in ICMA’s name, we remain predominantly a U.S. based organization that has a limited global footprint.***

Like most of ICMA’s members, I knew very little about ICMA’s global activities when I started as Executive Director. However, it soon became clear to me that our international efforts were centered around those projects funded by USAID and a few other major donors. The association has had a clear mission to capture new funding to do great international development work on decentralization, democracy and governance, sustainability and resilience, financial management, transparency, civic engagement and more. The other programs we run with our own resources and those provided by individual donors are minimal.

While Envision ICMA does provide some guidance, to be frank, the association did not and does not to this day have a clear sense of what we are driving towards. Coupled with a lack of vision, mission, and strategy, the internal organization at ICMA has not been well defined in my opinion. Different teams were engaging with global members, organizations, funders, and other stakeholders, but the connective tissue between them was minimal. Furthermore, the Board and others are clearly frustrated about the lack of a business model for becoming a more global organization.

We have made small steps over the last year to bring more coordination and responsibility to our international work, but it is clear to me that to redefine what it means to be a global organization now and in the future is not simply new investments in staff and/or programs. We must understand the challenges and the possibilities, know who we are and who we could be, and then make decisions about a global transformation.

As is noted in Envision ICMA: “the I in ICMA is more relevant than ever . . . (and) . . . ICMA must approach all its programs and services with a global perspective.”¹ However ICMA remains, predominantly an American organization doing international things. We are now beginning the conversations about why, where, and how we can transform into a truly global organization. ICMA’s strategic plan provides overall guidance about the need; and now we are ready to begin the difficult work of figuring out investments for implementation.

The purpose of this white paper is to set the stage for that conversation with the Board and others. We hope and expect that readers of this white paper will commit to join us in the dialogue about global transformation and the association’s path forward.

Marc Ott, ICMA Executive Director

Section 1.0: Background on Local Governance Worldwide

To be effective leaders, local government managers must be adept at identifying, starting, and facilitating conversations across borders; sharing best practices and resources to react and adapt to the changing dynamic and rapidly changing economic and social realities.¹

Over the last few decades the world has undergone significant transformations. Today a larger percentage of the world's population lives in urban areas and the trend is expected to continue. By 2050 nearly 70% of the globe's population may live in cities or peri-urban areas. This concentration of humanity into defined geographic zones, many of which will be governed by subnational entities, will continue to put pressure on the infrastructure, programs, resources, and other necessities for ensuring the health, welfare, and safety of residents. Transboundary issues such as climate change, disease, natural resource usage, economic opportunity and inclusivity, and terrorism are national and international challenges that can have very real local impacts for which local governments often have services, responses, and initiatives.

According to United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) there are more than 500,000 local governments worldwide. The complexity of local government ranges from a single level of subnational entities (municipalities, local government areas, local councils, local authorities, districts, etc.) to countries where there are multiple levels of local government. Table 1 provides a sampling of municipal level type local governments in countries from around the world.

Table 1: Sampling of Countries and Approximate Number of Municipal Type Local Governments³

Country	Population (in millions)	Number of Municipal Level Governments
United States	319.2	35,879
Canada	35.5	3,805
Croatia	4.2	555
Denmark	5.8	98
Estonia	1.3	215
Italy	60.9	8,047
France	66.2	35,885
Belgium	11.2	589
Netherlands	16.9	390
Romania	19.9	3,181
Brazil	202.8	5,570
Dominican Republic	10.4	191
El Salvador	6.4	262
Mexico	119.7	2,457
Israel	8.2	255
Jordan	7.7	94
Palestine	4.3	483
Turkey	77	1,397
Georgia	4.3	76
Moldova	3.4	1,679
Ukraine	45.4	10,670
Ethiopia	97.0	770
Kenya	44.9	47
Malawi	16.7	35
South Africa	54	278
Tanzania	50.8	160
Australia	23.7	571
India	1,295.3	250,671
Indonesia	254.5	508
Japan	127.1	1741
New Zealand	4.5	67
Philippines	99.1	42,028
Vietnam	90.7	11,145

The diversity in forms of government (FOG) is closely aligned with the diversity of authority, responsibilities, and services that are offered by local authorities. Expectedly, service area responsibilities, spending authority, and intergovernmental transfers of resources, electoral approaches, and administrative structures all differ across countries.

¹ Envision ICMA, page 6

Some examples are listed

below.

- In Germany, local governments are either *Gemeinden* (municipalities) or *Städte* (cities) with responsibilities in areas such as urban planning, municipal taxation, public transport, and public safety among others. *Kreise* (counties) include elected assemblies (*Kreistag*), a county president (*Landrat*), and the civil servants (*Landratsamt*) that work for the county's executive body (*vorstand*).
- With almost 2,500 municipalities (*Gminy*) in Poland, the local authorities include a council (*rada gminy*), Mayor (*wojt* in rural municipalities, *burmistrz* in urban municipalities, and *prezydent miasta* in cities of more than 100,000 residents), and heads of municipal administration (*sekretarz gminy*). This latter position is appointed by the mayor.⁴
- Bangladesh's local government structure is defined by the country's constitution, which states that "in every administrative unit of the government shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with the law."⁵ Local governments are divided into rural, urban, and hill districts.

In many places, the structure of local governance is continuously evolving due to national level laws and regulations, increasing service area responsibilities, public financial management approaches, transparency requirements, and more. For example, in a 30-year span, Nepal has gradually transitioned from a very centralized monarchical system to a federal system where local governments now have powers and responsibilities that they never had before.

The trend towards decentralization of governance from national to subnational structures is one of the notable trends of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The migration towards increasing

centralization of authority that was prevalent during the 1940s and 1950s began to shift in the decades that followed. By the 1990s, the changeover of authoritarian governments to democracy increased the pace of decentralization around the world. Today more than 100 countries have some form of decentralized governance structures that allow for local control on a range of decision making and services.

Urbanization is another driver of local governance. The trend towards urban living has been growing rapidly since 1950. The United Nations, and many other researchers, suggest that the majority of the world's residents will live in urban areas by 2050. As Envision ICMA notes, "In response to these and other shifts, local governments will have to address new configurations for housing, transportation, infrastructure, community facilities, health care, social services, education, and public safety."

Conclusion

The global local government marketplace is massive and evolving and the challenges of finding the appropriate places to invest ICMA resources is complicated, potentially expensive, and will likely require continuous refinement over the coming years.



Section 2.0: The Genesis and Evolution of ICMA's Global Activities

The movement to decentralize is far reaching and increasing in intensity. Local governments are becoming agents of change and providers of services, and yet many local governments are unable to provide for the citizens they serve. The Resource Cities Program and its successor CityLinks have proven to be effective and pragmatic technical assistance tools that provide real solutions to the problems facing cities in the developing world.²

ICMA's vision of establishing a global presence began as early as 1924, when the organization, established as the City Managers' Association, formally changed its name to the International City Managers Association. While the 'I' in ICMA initially referred to Canadian membership, it was also understood as an organizational shift to aid in the improvement of municipal administration generally.

From 1956 to 1967, ICMA's international presence was advanced substantially, as executive director Orin Nolting traveled extensively throughout Western Europe to advocate on behalf of the council-manager form of local government in communities and at conferences arranged by the International Union of Local Authorities (which today is known as UCLG, United Cities and Local Governments).

Following Nolting's example, ICMA continued its pursuit of international engagement through a handful of programs and initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s, including the European Task Force, which brought U.S. and Canadian local government managers, academics, and the deputy director of ICMA to England, the Netherlands, and West Germany to meet with high-level officials and explore European approaches to intergovernmental relations, planning, and downtown redevelopment and beautification. ICMA also established a close relationship with the Society of Local Authority Chief

Executives of England (SOLACE), with both organizations sending representatives to their respective conferences. Additionally, ICMA undertook several small-scale projects funded by donor organizations like a professional development focused Philippine Internship Program in 1976.

Despite a multitude of efforts to provide technical assistance on an international scale, 1989 was the first year ICMA took on the challenge of writing a proposal to USAID, a development which marks the beginning of the organization's Global Programs Management team. Coordinating with several municipal associations in the U.S. and abroad – including the American Public Works Association and the Government Finance Officers Association – ICMA was awarded the multimillion-dollar Municipal Development and Management Project to help local officials in developing and decentralizing countries such as Honduras and Poland. In February 1991, ICMA launched a new stage in its international programs by opening two offices in Honduras as part of the Honduras Municipal Development Project. Designed to empower local municipalities to better manage land use, infrastructure development, municipal finances, and public service delivery, the project encouraged a 'bottom-up' approach to municipal development. Additional contracts secured that decade include the following:

- The beginning of ICMA's formal involvement in Mexico through a USAID-funded project in Juarez in 1996, which focused on promoting environmentally sustainable community projects.
- The USAID-funded U.S.-Mexico Partnership for Municipal Development, implemented from 1997 to 2003, through which ICMA contributed strengthening democratic institutions in Mexico,

² ICMA, 2003. Resource Cities and CityLinks 2003 Annual Report, Page V.

- with an emphasis on service delivery, performance measurement, and accountability.
- The creation of the Bulgaria Technical Twinning Program (BTTP) to help the nation of Bulgaria find sustainable local solutions to problems accompanying the country's march towards democracy and decentralization. Awarded by USAID in 1997, the BTTP would later evolve into the Bulgaria CityLinks™ program.
- The award of the Sustainable Urban Management (SUM) IQC, which ICMA received from USAID in 1999 in order to mobilize technical assistance and training to support well-managed urbanization in over 20 countries around the world.

As Global Programs took shape during this decade, one of the most important programs providing international engagement was developed: ICMA's flagship approach for international technical assistance, professional exchanges, and knowledge sharing — CityLinks™. Established with USAID funding in 1997 as Resource Cities, the program's methodology paired local governments in the U.S. with their counterparts in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The program continued through 2008 and was resumed in 2011 for a five-year cooperative agreement until 2016. Examples of prominent CityLinks™ projects include several efforts around the world, such as:

- A post-tsunami recovery project in the Indian cities of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam, which drew on the expertise of three cities in Florida in modifying infrastructure to mitigate flooding and provide access to safe drinking water for residents.
- The medical waste collection and disposal initiative designed by CityLinks partners to safeguard community health and access to uncontaminated water in Jordan.

- Capacity building in the Ethiopian municipalities of Jigjia and Gambella, which included technical assistance in service delivery, practitioner to practitioner exchanges, and the utilization of the CityLinks™ model to improve the public-private sector relationship.
- Climate adaptation training in Dar es Salaam and Durban by partnering municipal leaders and engineers to increase their capacity to address shared environmental challenges to collaborate on locally driven efforts to ensure climate resilient infrastructure.
- Violence prevention and the enhancement of citizen security in the Honduran cities of La Ceiba and Choloma through training sessions on the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) methodology. These sessions were conducted by city officials from Los Angeles, the U.S. counterpart in this CityLinks™ project.

The 1990s also saw the opening of additional field offices for projects funded by USAID and other donors. As Eastern Europe opened to the West, ICMA established its second field office in Romania in 1994, which soon was followed by the establishment of field offices throughout Eastern and Central Europe, as well as Central Asia, in countries such as Poland, Slovakia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Establishing a presence in South Asia was also a high priority for Global Programs during this decade, an effort which culminated in the foundation of ICMA India in 1997, renamed the Urban Management Centre (UMC) in 2005, when it became an independent organization and a special partner of ICMA. In 2004, ICMA established ICMA México Latinoamérica to provide a presence in Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by the establishment of the ICMA China Center in 2011, and ICMA Europe in 2017.

The largest expansion of ICMA's international technical assistance work began in the mid-2000s in Iraq and Afghanistan. In Iraq, ICMA worked as a subcontractor to support new local leaders in establishing democratic local governments in their regions through the Iraq Local Governance Project (LGP). With the aim to build the capacity of local authorities and institutions to participate in the post-war reconstruction process, LGP formed Local Governance Teams to promote the concept of local democracy and strengthen municipal institutions.

ICMA's first project in Afghanistan strengthened the municipal capacity of Kabul, followed by similar programs such as the USAID-funded Afghanistan Municipal Strengthening Program (AMSP) and Regional Afghan Municipalities Program for Urban Populations (RAMP-UP). ICMA currently has one project remaining in Afghanistan – Strong Hubs for Afghan Hope and Resilience (SHAHAR)—which is also focused on capacity building, as well as improving financial management.

Additional programs implemented during this time include the following.

- The Tajikistan Municipal Development Strategy, through which ICMA developed a comprehensive strategy, including recommendations for municipal and agency restructuring that the World Bank in turn used to establish the Communal Services Development Fund (CSDF) to support the nation's infrastructure.
- The USAID-funded Indonesia Local Governance Support Program (LGSP), through which ICMA ensured that local legislatures and civil society performed their legitimate roles of legislative representation and oversight.
- The USAID-funded Kosovo Democratic and Effective Municipalities Initiative (DEMI), which supported the decentralization process by assisting Kosovo municipalities, their leaders and

citizens to promote and encourage good governance.

- The USAID-funded Citizens for Transparent Municipalities (CIMTRA) program in Mexico, which developed an evaluation tool to measure the transparency and accountability of municipalities, which has since become a reference for national policy makers.
- The USAID-funded Municipal Partnerships for Violence Prevention in Central America (AMUPREV), which ICMA implemented from October 2009 to September 2019, providing municipal-based violence prevention strategies through the development of regional peer knowledge networks.

Since 1979, ICMA has organized professional exchange programs meant to expand participants' horizons by collaborating with their colleagues from around the world. ICMA's first and longest-running exchange program, the International Management Exchange Program (IMEP), consists of exchange visits between in-service U.S. members and their counterparts from one of ICMA's international affiliates.

Since 2010, ICMA has worked with U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs (ECA) on exchanges connecting young professionals in local government with their counterparts in the United States and elsewhere. The first fellows through this program came from China, Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand. Since then, ICMA's work with the State Department has expanded to offer exchange programs with numerous other countries, including ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) members YSEALI (Youth Southeast Asian Leadership Initiative). As of 2019, more than 500 fellows have participated in ICMA's exchange programs.

Conclusion

Historically, ICMA's global efforts have been a mixture of grant and contract funded as well as ICMA-funded endeavors. However, since 1989 the bulk of the association's work on the international stage has been focused on international development and professional exchanges funded by agencies such as USAID and the U.S. Department of State. Investments in specific countries and regions such as India, China, Latin America, and Europe have helped to achieve some successes; however, with each investment, the return in terms of resources, membership growth, or new markets for products and services has been limited.

Section 3.0: ICMA's Current Global Activities

*I attended the first ICMA International Academy that ICMA staff presented in 2004. From there it was off and running.*³

3.1 Introduction

The previous section provided a snapshot of ICMA's historical engagement with the global local government marketplace. This section sketches and overview of current activities.

ICMA's current global initiatives can be divided into several categories: grant and contract funded technical assistance; fellowship and exchange programs; and affiliations with organizations from many countries.

3.2 Grant and Contract Funded Technical Assistance

The primary modality for ICMA's international work has been the thirty years of technical assistance provided to decentralizing countries and local governments around the world. Currently, ICMA manages several significant programs.

SURGE (Philippines). The five-year Strengthening Urban Resilience for Growth with Equity (SURGE) project started in July 2015, and focuses on secondary cities outside of Metro Manila, starting with Batangas City, Puerto Princesa City, Iloilo City, Tagbilaran City, Cagayan de Oro City, Zamboanga City, Legazpi City, and General Santos City. Funded by USAID, the objectives of SURGE are to improve local capacity in inclusive and resilient urban development; promote low-emission local economic development strategies; expand economic connectivity and access between urban and rural areas; and strengthen multi-sectoral capacity to ensure inclusive growth.

³ Clay Pearson, city manager, Pearland TX quoted in November 2018 *PM Magazine*, page 5.

CVE (Bangladesh). This two-year program funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism works to empower community actors to counter terrorist ideology via community engagement partnerships; training of family members, educators, and religious authorities to serve as an early warning system for terrorist radicalization; and helping to develop trust between government officials and the communities they serve.



In India, ICMA is a subcontractor to UMC on the Moving India Towards Sanitation for All Program (MISAAL) where ICMA is managing a CityLinks exchange between Jodhpur and Ahmedabad in India and Pearland, TX in the United States. ICMA will also assess the City Manager's Association in Gujarat and Rajasthan and provide recommendations for strengthening these associations.

ICMA continues to invest heavily in securing new grants and contracts from U.S. and other donors through a business development and bid and proposal (B&P) unit. For reference, business development is defined as those activities designed to position ICMA for future funding. Similarly, bid and proposal is the process of competing for specific new grants and contracts in areas that align with ICMA's expertise in local government management and leadership. It is important to note that ICMA's business development and B&P activities are also seeking grants and contracts for U.S. programs and services. Examples of domestic programs include ICMA's long running partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to manage the National Brownfields Conference, as well as a 10-year series of partnerships with the U.S. Department of Energy on solar energy and other smaller and shorter-term programs.

Until 2015, ICMA's internationally focused and domestic-focused grant and contract work were separated into two distinct teams. As part of an association-wide reorganization, ICMA International and ICMA's U.S. program centers were merged into a single unit that has since been known as ICMA's Global Program Management (GPM) team. The



merger of the two teams was put in place to realize administrative efficiencies, and to leverage the program and project management expertise of staff in new ways both domestically and internationally. The current team of GPM staff and consultants will often work on both domestic and international projects.

3.3 Fellowships, Scholarships, and Exchanges

Using a combination of funding strategies, ICMA continues to operate several internally and externally funded fellowship and exchange programs. The Young Southeast Leaders Initiative Fellows (YSEALI Fellows) program is the latest iteration of the 10-year partnership between ICMA and the U.S. Department of State. Through this program, ICMA and our partners recruit fellows that are part of the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), a program that enables young leaders from ASEAN countries and Timor-Leste to work directly with counterparts in local government offices across the United States to enhance their practical expertise, leadership skills, and professional contacts to address challenges and create new opportunities in their home communities. Fellows come from Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. The goal of the program is to create institutionalized long-term partnerships that support these emerging leaders and their institutions in the ASEAN countries and Timor-Leste and the U.S. to inspire change in creating responsive, open, and accountable governance.

Other current activities to promote international exchanges include the International Management Exchange Program, Bill Hansell Scholarship, John Garvey Scholarship and the Tranter-Leong Fellowship.

Following a donation by two retired ICMA members—Revan Tranter and Eugene Leong, the Tranter-Leong Fellowship was established. The fellowship provides a stipend for ICMA members to

undertake an international experience to conduct research or engage in other activities in support of their professional goals. The program allows for up to two fellowships per year. Since 2018, three fellowships have been awarded.

3.4 International Affiliate Program and Other Investments

For at least the last ten years, ICMA has maintained affiliate agreements with several dozen organizations around the world. As of this writing, ICMA has relationships with 34 organizations, as listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: ICMA’s International Affiliate Partnering Organizations

Affiliates by Country	
AUSTRALIA	Local Government Professionals Australia (LGPA)
BANGLADESH	Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB)
BELGIUM	Exello.net
CANADA	Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA)
CZECH REPUBLIC	Association of Secretaries of Urban and Municipal Authorities of the Czech Republic (STMOÚ)
DENMARK	National Association of Chief Executives in Danish Municipalities (KOMDIR)
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	Dominican Federation of Municipalities (FEDOMU)
HONDURAS	Honduran Municipal Association (AMHON)
INDIA	City Managers' Association of Karnataka
INDIA	City Managers' Association of Rajasthan
INDIA	City Managers' Association, Gujarat
INDONESIA	Indonesia Municipalities (APEKSI)
IRELAND	County and City Managers' Association of Ireland (CCMA)
ISRAEL	Federation of Local Authorities in Israel

KENYA	Association of County Governments of Kenya (ACGOK)
NEPAL	Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN)
NETHERLANDS	Dutch City Managers Association (Vereniging Van Gemeentesecretarissen)
NEW ZEALAND	New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers (SOLGM)
PALESTINE	Association of Palestinian Local Authorities
PHILIPPINES	League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP)
POLAND	
ROMANIA	The Association of Public Administrators in Romania (AAPRO)
SLOVAKIA	Slovak City Managers Association (SCMA)
SOUTH AFRICA	Institute for Local Government Management of South Africa (iLGM)
SRI LANKA	Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities
SWAZILAND	Local Authorities Managers Association of Swaziland (LAMAS)
SWEDEN	Association of Swedish City Managers (Svenska Kommundirektorsforeningen)
TANZANIA	Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania (ALAT)
UNITED KINGDOM	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives & Senior Managers (SOLACE)
VIETNAM	Association of Cities of Vietnam (ACVN)

Multinational Affiliates	
ECUADOR	Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations of Latin America (FLACMA)
GUATEMALA	Confederation of Municipalities of Central America and the Caribbean (CAMCAYCA)
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	Environmental Center for Arab Towns

As noted in the previous section, ICMA has invested more heavily in several countries and regions around

the world including India, Latin America, China, and Europe. In each of these regions, ICMA has provided start-up funding, staff, and other resources to kick-start activities.

ICMA Europe, founded in 2017 is a stand-alone organization with its headquarters in Slovakia. An ICMA member currently serves as the organization's Executive Director. ICMA Europe is governed by a three-member board, which includes ICMA's executive director, staff member leading international programming, and European region's ICMA executive board member. Currently, the three board members are Marc Ott, Tad McGalliard and Robert Kristoff, respectively.

ICMA China is the partnership between ICMA and the China University for Policy and Law (CUPL). As noted in the last section, ICMA China was started in 2011 to establish partnerships on local governance between the two countries. Currently, programming includes a small number of exchanges between the U.S. and China; a program that recruits city or county managers to serve as guest lecturers at CUPL; periodic events; and a strategic partnership with the Shaanxi Land Engineering firm to share best practices on brownfields redevelopment.

ICMA's relationship with UMC (once ICMA India) is now largely focused on funded projects as well as occasional exchanges and visits by ICMA staff and experts. For example, in 2019, ICMA executive director Marc Ott, past president Lee Feldman, and several other participants visited India as part of the kickoff for the MISAAL program and to explore additional opportunities.

ICMA Latin America is now a stand-alone organization after several years of ICMA investment. The organization is led by an executive director, and its relationship with ICMA is currently based on a single funded project as well as exploration of new opportunities in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

Conclusion

ICMA's current work is a blend of technical assistance, fellowship and professional exchanges, and a variety of affiliate relationships, some of which have benefited from heavy investment by ICMA. As suggested earlier, ICMA's greatest success has been in funded technical assistance and fellowships.



Section 4.0: Transforming from Domestically Dominant to Globally Engaged

*Nonprofit organizations function similarly to for-profit organizations in their global aspirations, strategies, and dynamics. The globalization of markets has its evident parallels in globalization of the third-sector delivery of public and quasi-public goods and services as well as in international advocacy, solidarity, and collective action. The nonprofit mind-set and operational model are surprisingly tradeable.*⁴

With more than 12,000 members, 96% of which are from the United States, ICMA is clearly a market leader as the professional association for city and county managers, their deputies and assistants, and others that may one day aspire to be in that role. Over the last 30 years, ICMA has built a multi-million-dollar international technical assistance, networking, and training business line that relies on infusions of federal and international donor funding. Now the association is exploring the possibility of a transformational shift that expands not only our grant-funded international activities, but potentially the full range of programs including membership, products, and services that are mostly tailored for our members in the United States.

ICMA is not alone in this exploration. Every day, small business startups and Fortune 500 firms are having the same conversations. Will the organization's products or services meet the needs of a stakeholder audience in a country far away from corporate HQ? Mega brands such as Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Apple, Toyota and others at one point all made the strategic decision and successfully expanded operations from their home country into others.

4.1 Internationalizing Nonprofits

John Casey, a professor with CUNY's Baruch College explores the internationalization of domestic

⁴ Casey, John, 2018. *The Internationalization of the Nonprofit Sector*. Weissman Center for International Business, Occasional Paper Series, No. 18.

nonprofits. In his book chapter on this topic there are several key findings for ICMA to consider.

- Connections and contacts between mission aligned nonprofit organizations is increasing due to the prevalence and advancement of communication technologies.
- Casual or sporadic contacts with like-minded organizations are often a precursor to more formalized relationships.

He also notes that will one reason U.S. organizations internationalize is because they are already the dominant player in their field. He cites the emergence of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of America, which was founded in the 1950s, but gradually evolved into its current international role starting in the 1970s.

Not many in public administration may have noticed, but the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) is now the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration. This decision was made after a growing number of requests for accreditation from non-US schools.

Casey's chapter also notes that some international transitions are more difficult than others. For example, GuideStar, which is a searchable global database of funding transparency for nonprofit organizations has only been fully replicated in the United States, Great Britain, and Israel. The challenges of data collection and accessibility vary widely in other countries.⁵

4.2 Case Studies

This section summarizes a couple of case studies for organizations that have tried to internationalize their operations: one like ICMA, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and a second, Netflix.

⁵ Casey, John, 2018. *The Internationalization of the Nonprofit Sector*

UCLG

UCLG is an international network of subnational local governments that traces its roots as far back as ICMA. The Union Internationale des Villes was launched in 1913 with approximately thirty members headquartered in Belgium. In 1928, the organization changed names to become the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) until 2004, when it merged with two other European-based local government organizations; the United Towns Organization, which was based in France; and Metropolis, which had started in Montreal in 1985. The three organizations became UCLG and moved its headquarters to Barcelona, Spain in 2004.

Since 2004, UCLG has become one of the largest nongovernmental organizations and federation of mission aligned groups representing local governments worldwide. The organization's literature claims to represent a network of more than 240,000 towns, cities, and regions in more than 140 countries as well as 175+ local and regional local government associations. UCLG includes seven sections or divisions in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Eurasia, Latin America, Middle East-East Asia, and North America. The executive council currently features many mayors and similar titles from cities around the world, as well as presidents and executives from country specific local governance organizations. For example, the current president is Parks Tau, who is also the President of the South African Local Government Association. The North American section is coordinated through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Each of the sections appear to maintain their own membership fee structures. For example, UCLG Africa lists membership rates for different organizations ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000 annually.

According to UCLG's 2017 annual report, the headquarters division had 30 staff with an operating budget of approximately \$3.7 million. Key funders include:

- European Commission
- Barcelona Provincial Council
- City of Barcelona
- European Climate Foundation
- French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs
- French Development Agency
- UN-Habitat
- International Labour Organization

Other "contributors" include local governments that offer in-kind resources and other organizations that support meetings and events. UCLG does have a membership program that is open to the following kinds of individuals and organizations:

- **Local or Regional Government** of the UCLG network is open to individual towns, cities and local governments.
- **Local or Regional Governments' Associations:** representing local or regional governments in a country or state.
- **International Association of Local Governments** is open to international local government organizations that represent specific categories of local governments, and/or whose purposes relate to specific sectors or thematic issues.
- **Associate membership** is open to organizations which, though not themselves local government organizations, are strongly concerned with or involved in local government matters, such as: NGOs, researchers, training centers, academic institutions, ministries, state agencies, international organizations, foundations, and corporations.

From the organization's website: "All members are required to pay an annual membership fee.

Membership fees are based on a calculation that takes into consideration the number of inhabitants

represented by the member, and the state of the country's economic development." ICMA was unable to uncover any information about resources generated through membership fees.

Netflix

Netflix presents an interesting case. While certainly Netflix is not a nonprofit or a professional association, it is a content provider. ICMA as a professional association provides content through research, publications, events, assistance, and support to members. So, while the business models are very different, some of the lessons of globalization are very relevant.

Founded in the late 1990s as a mail order VCR and DVD rental service, Netflix is now a global powerhouse, leading the way in video on demand services (VOD) through internet streaming of content. Expanding globally was a necessity for continued growth as the domestic market became saturated and new competition from other streaming services, such as Hulu, came into business. The company's expansion internationally was further fueled by successful forays into Canada, Europe, and parts of Latin America. The company faced numerous challenges, including the following:

- **Regulatory restrictions.** Regulatory challenges such as stricter censorship of content for religious and other reasons in some markets such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam have been challenging for Netflix.
- **Local Competition.** In many places, competition from local pay television operators and VOD was stiff because of established enterprises. Similar services already existed in lucrative markets such as Japan and Canada, as well as growth potential markets such as India. Similarly, much of those countries' content —such as more than 3,000 Bollywood films and shows—were already licensed to a domestic provider.

- **Local Adaptation.** Like many organizations, Netflix's content started in English for the domestic market. Expanding globally meant translation of existing content into many languages, while also creating new content, often in partnership with local providers in host countries.
- **Infrastructure.** Streaming infrastructure has been a challenge in some countries; however, it is gradually becoming less of an issue as improvements are made throughout the world.
- **Cost.** Netflix has spent billions of dollars to expand globally through content creation, licensing agreements, marketing, and technology. Moreover, in many places, Netflix's pricing strategy made local competitors more affordable. Indirectly, this same pricing scheme opened opportunities for piracy of Netflix content in some places.

Conclusion

The world offers many opportunities for nonprofit professional and other associations like ICMA, yet the challenges of expanding operations are also very real. In many ways, ICMA is already an "international" organization, with programs, projects, partnerships, and a legacy in many places where we have worked. As is discussed in the next section, global transformation requires an investment of time, research, and recalibration, potentially encompassing everything from foundational principles to daily operations.



Section 5.0 The Future of ICMA's Global Engagement

*The big issues that local governments face are issues that transcend traditional boundaries.*⁶

For more than 100 years, ICMA has been the home for professional local government managers, providing knowledge, resources, training and education, and a peer-to-peer network of fellow practitioners. Over the last 30 years, ICMA has grown an international technical assistance business line that has helped local governments in more than 70 countries. Similarly, a well-established series of fellowship and scholarship programs have enabled hundreds of members and non-members to network, share challenges, and discuss leading practice solutions to the common issues they face in the profession of local government. Yet, international members are less than 5% of the total number of ICMA members. Most of ICMA's current content and professional development offerings are made in an American context, for an American audience and prepared or written in English only. *It can be argued that the century old buildout of ICMA's capabilities as a professional association of members has largely been guided by and produced for an American audience and more specifically for city managers in the council-manager form of local government.*

In short, ICMA is an American organization that engages globally incrementally. Fundamental to an expansive mission on the global stage, ICMA and the ICMA executive board, will need to consider a variety of challenges, competitors, and importantly, data.

The challenges of going global are not insignificant and include obvious obstacles such as language, form of government, relevance of products and services to countries, regions, and localities with established frameworks, norms and behavioral contexts within which they operate. Within these constraints:

- How do we decide where and how to make investments?
- What strategic and structural adaptations will ICMA need to make to expand the association's global reach beyond the current status and market share?

While nonprofit organizations do not normally have conversations about competitors and marketplaces, that is exactly some of the territory that ICMA will need to explore. In the United States, few organizations can lay claim to the scope and scale of ICMA's membership base. However, around the world there already exist similar professional associations for local government professionals as evidenced by the 30 or more international affiliate organizations that partner with ICMA and dozens of others across the world.

- What will entice members of those organizations to also consider membership in ICMA and/or become customers of our programs, products, and services?
- Does ICMA fill a niche that transnational organizations like UCLG do not claim or serve?
- Are there other directions that ICMA might consider in order to operate effectively alongside or in partnership with UCLG and other similar groups?

To expand ICMA's membership globally, ICMA may need to be inclusive and allow full membership to local government professionals that may come from different forms of local governments as many countries do not have a council-manager form of local government or a city manager position.

- Will ICMA be open to truly being International City/County "Management" Association where the focus is on

⁶ Envision ICMA, page 6.

strengthening the management of local governments rather than who we do it through?

- Will ICMA consider different missions and methods of operation for its U.S and global operations?

Research by other organizations suggest that the local government marketplace is substantial with more than 500,000 “municipal-like” governments around the world. To become more of a global organization, ICMA must consider:

- How can ICMA better understand issues such as the market volume for ICMA’s current and potential offerings to customers and stakeholders?
- Which regions or countries make sense for ICMA and why?
- Who are we not going to serve?

Anyone that has travelled internationally knows that the price of products and services varies widely from country to country and market to market within that country.

- What data will we need to understand about willingness and ability to procure products and services, including membership?

Calibrating our products and services for dozens of different countries and marketplaces requires an understanding of competitive advantages we may bring to the table and a willingness to invest in retooling to meet local needs.

- Are we confident that we do have a competitive advantage over existing organizations in the global marketplace?
- Does an organization like ICMA have the market research capability and the resources

to do this in multiple countries and in multiple languages at the same time?

- What impact will our Code of Ethics have in trying to grow in places where professional norms are not the same?
- Should ICMA only be active in countries with an existing democratic tradition?

Even if the external factors (market size and trends, competitive advantages, demand for programs, products and services) align and point to going global, ICMA will need to understand if the internal pieces are aligned. Eagerness to expand globally may overshadow the deliberate and needed research and assessment of internal capacity (language skills, cultural adaptation skills, available financial and organization resources, and the opportunity costs of realigning them).

There are many other challenges, competitor information, and data that ICMA will need before pivoting to expand our global presence.

Conclusion

According to John Casey’s article on internationalizing nonprofit organizations:

Engaging globally requires formerly domestic organizations to closely examine their processes to better understand how they can be adapted to different economic, legal, and social cultures in which they seek to operate.⁷

ICMA’s executive board and staff will need to explore the fundamental questions: should ICMA remain a U.S.-based organization that expands what it currently does internationally; or should ICMA become a truly global organization with programs, products, services, and members for a worldwide audience?

⁷ Casey, John, 2018. The Internationalization of the Nonprofit Sector