NAPA Notes: LGWG Research Agenda Development Meeting

July 31, 2025

Agenda:

2:00 PM – 2:05 PM Welcome

2:05 PM – 2:10 PM Overview of Issues – David Swindell

2:10 PM – 2:15 PM Call for Nominations for National Council for ASPA – John Bartle

2:15 PM – 2:20 PM Transition to Discussion Groups

2:20 PM – 2:40 PM Discussion #1

Fiscal Health and Sustainability – Shayne Kavanaugh

Citizen-Governance Disconnect - David Swindell

Emerging Technology in Local Government – Craig Maher

Preemption/State and Federal Impacts – Carl Stenberg

Recruitment and Retention of Employees – Gerald Young

2:40 PM – 2:45 PM Transition of Discussion Groups

2:40 PM – 3:00 PM Discussion #2

3:05 PM – 3:10 PM Transition Back to Large Group

3:10 PM – 3:30 PM Report Out of Groups – Next Steps

Next Steps

* We will meet in person on the Saturday before ICMA conference in the afternoon – details to come
* Reconvene the leaders together at the end of August/early Sept

John Bartle- President of ASPA

* Longtime member of Siam
* I encourage you to vote and/or run for the open seats in regions 1, 3, 4, and potentially 5 in our upcoming elections
* Next week, we will send out the call for proposals for our conference (workshops, papers, and panels)
* Conference will be in Hollywood, California
  + Tracks include:
    - Citizen engagement and participation
    - Artificial intelligence and digital transformation
    - Public workforce, HR, and organizational culture
    - Democratic governance and public trust
    - Emergency management, environmental sustainability, and crisis response
    - Public finance and economics
    - Global governance administration and red tape
* Wright Symposium will be hosted at the front end of the conference

Group Debrief (recorded)

Fiscal Health and Sustainability – Shayne Kavanaugh

* Local gov are taking on more services than they have in the past
* But then there are things happening on state level that are reducing autonomy of local governments in important ways, like tax limitations, or limitations of local governments to get involved in lobbying, which seems to act against the principal subsidiarity, so these two things don't match up
* First principle question – where do we locate these decisions within the hierarchy of state, local, federal govt?
* They just need to use the money they have differently, or maybe they need to first prove to their public that they are an adequate steward of the money and deserving of more, right? Because people may have legitimate concerns about whether or not they ought to be funding their local government at higher levels. They may not also the point was made, they may not.

Citizen-Governance Disconnect - David Swindell

* Battling the erosion of public trust in local govt
* How to help citizens understand what it is they’re spending money on
* How to envision alternative ways to meet people where they are
  + Instead of town hall meetings, go to the local events, the soccer meets, the dog parks to reach out to
  + You can also use AI tools to gather information on social media trends of the community
* How can we encourage people to be citizens again?’
  + Be clear about what the tradeoffs are when decisions are being made
* Lot of good research opportunities from our conversation
* Trust group additions: best practices in public engagement given the faltering effectiveness of traditional methods, latest learning from participatory budgeting initiatives, and community compensation as a factor in building trust with disadvantaged communities

Emerging Technology in Local Government – Craig Maher

* Vendors tend to be setting the parameters. There are information asymmetries, putting local govts in challenging positions
* Lack of competition amongst vendors
  + Tech is driving the process rather than us driving the process
  + How can we research and evaluate vendor models?
  + Best practices/case studies in ERP systems
* How can we as researchers better understand what local govs can do (NLC and others have lost funding to do surveys)
  + Then we have to consider the lag time of what work is needed to be done vs time to publish research
* How do managers navigate trade-offs of values in relation to adopting new technologies?
* To Craig's point, GFOA has discussed the institutions of the future are increasing built in electrons (bits and bytes) and less so in atoms. Therefore, the GFOA board recently approved us seriously investigating the founding of a "Public Finance Innovation Lab" - part of founding motivation is for the profession to have a "hand on the steering wheel" when it comes to the design of our future institutions

Preemption/State and Federal Impacts – Carl Stenberg

* We need to know more about the effects of preemption or non-preemption
* We don’t know effects of preemption on broadband for example, same for tax authority or DEI
* There are different definitions depending on if you're taking to an attorney or social scientist
* Then you can talk about home rule and state control
* Impacts of these preemptions, where they come from
* Political implications of preemption. Retaliation along partisan lines. DOGE commissions are looking at preemption to promote efficiency
* Need for more case studies for successful efforts like Colorado's effort to push back broadband preemption

Recruitment and Retention of Employees – Gerald Young

* Effect of residency requirements specifically for city managers
* Do flexible work arrangements actually have a benefit to attracting and retaining talent?
* Do procurement policies that have equity-based goals actually achieve those goals?
* What impacts can still be achieved in DEIA despite the microscope they’re under right now?
* Looking at K-12 institutions – are they aware of the public sector opportunities. Data sharing between employers and the schools- the skills being developed should match up
* Succession planning – measuring impact on not having a succession plan in place and the benefit of having one in place
* Policing – policy implications – community policing, broken windows policing, alternative response mental health providers. What types of training are being provided and what is effective?
* Messaging around public service being positive – finding effective branding campaigns