

## On-line Appendix

### What Makes A Good Local Leader? Evidence From U.S. Mayors and City Managers

Supplementary information intended for on-line publication

A.1 Survey Methodology . . . . .	A-1
Survey Recruitment and Design . . . . .	A-1
Scoring Interviews . . . . .	A-7
Collecting Unbiased Responses . . . . .	A-9
B.1 Descriptive Statistics . . . . .	A-10
B.2 Validity of Measures of Quality . . . . .	A-12
B.3 Classifying Policy Goals . . . . .	A-12

#### A.1 Survey Methodology

**Survey Recruitment and Design** After identifying the universe of cities above 5,000 residents in the 9 states described in the main text, interviewers determined whether they should contact the mayor (in mayor-council systems) or the city manager (in council-manager systems). Interviewers contacted respondents by both phone and email inviting them to take part in the study and providing details of the project. To increase participation, we secured a letter of support from the National League of Cities. The body of the email and the letter are shown below. Interviewers kept contacting the mayor/manager by phone and email until the respondent either declined or agreed to participate in our study, and each respondent was contacted by one interviewer only. On average, interviewers called each mayor or manager 3 times and sent 4 emails before securing an interview, and our overall response rate was 32%.



Dear Mayor/City Manager,

We are a research team from New York University (NYU) and University California San Diego working on an academic research project on the different managerial styles and practices employed across the U.S. in its local governments. The project is directed by [Prof. Maria Carreri](#) at UCSD and [Prof. Julia Payson](#) at New York University. We believe that mayors and city managers play a fundamental role for the success of their city and the well-being of its citizens. It is based on this conviction that we are interested in understanding the different practices and managerial styles employed at the city level across the country, and your input would be extremely valuable in making this project successful. We invite you to take part in our study through a brief and confidential phone conversation revolving around your experience in city governments.

Potential benefits to you include:

- A copy of the results of our academic research prior to their publication
- An opportunity to contribute to an academic study with the potential to identify best practices across city governments
- Other mayors have enjoyed our phone conversation and have considered it a great opportunity to discuss and reflect upon their managerial practices in a completely confidential environment

The phone conversation will touch upon four macro areas related to your government practices: targets, performance monitoring, operations and people management. We will also pose a few questions on your experience and background. The conversation is expected to last 25 minutes. No compensation will be provided and neither you nor the city will incur any expense as a result of the study. The conversation will be confidential to guarantee that no risk will be associated to your participation to this academic study. Your identity and the name of the city will be kept confidential and not mentioned by name in the study. We will be delighted to answer any questions you might have at any time. We encourage you to contact Prof. Carreri or Prof. Payson, the project directors. This study (STU00208676) has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). You may talk to them at (312) 503-9338 or [irb@northwestern.edu](mailto:irb@northwestern.edu).

We will be in touch by phone in the coming days. Should it be more convenient for you to contact us directly, we will be grateful to receive an email or a phone call. We look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maria Carreri".

Maria Carreri  
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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julia Payson".

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October 10, 2018

To whom it may concern,

As Director of Research of the National League of Cities, I certify that the Dr. Maria Carreri (Northwestern University) and Professor Julia Payson (New York University) have communicated the details of their research study on U.S. the management practices of local officials. The NLC supports this academic study as it has the potential to contribute to a better understanding of city governments, to disseminate best practices, and to strengthen partnerships between local government practitioners and the academic community.

I therefore encourage you to feel free to participate in this study and to reach out to Dr. Maria Carreria ([maria.carreri@kellogg.northwestern.edu](mailto:maria.carreri@kellogg.northwestern.edu)) or Professor Payson ([julia.payson@nyu.edu](mailto:julia.payson@nyu.edu)) if you have additional questions.

Best Regards,

*Christiana K. McFarland*  
Christiana K. McFarland

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Management Survey Questions			
Target Setting			
<p><b>1) Target Inter-Connection</b></p> <p>Score: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> . <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a) We would like to start by learning what you think are some of the main issues currently facing your city.  b) What types of goals or objectives have you set for your city and what are the practical targets related to these goals?  c) How are these goals assigned or delegated down to the individual members of the government and staff?</p>		
	<p><i>Score 1: Objectives and targets are very loosely defined without specific targets associated with them; goals are not communicated and/or delegated to other members of the staff</i></p>	<p><i>Score 3: Objectives are well-defined with related targets; there is some communication and/or delegation but only to certain staff or departments</i></p>	<p><i>Score 5: Objectives are very clearly defined with specific related targets; targets are clearly and widely communicated and/or delegated to many different departments or members of staff</i></p>
<p><b>2) Time Horizon of Targets</b></p> <p>Score: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> . <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a) What kind of timeline are you looking at with your goals?  b) Which goals receive the most emphasis? Long-term or short-term ones?  c) Are the long-term and short-term goals set together or independently?</p>		
	<p><i>Score 1: The main focus is on short-term targets. Or, "it varies" without any follow-up or specific discussion of timelines.</i></p>	<p><i>Score 3: There are both short and long-term goals for most areas with specific timelines, but they are not necessarily linked to each other.</i></p>	<p><i>Score 5: Long-term goals are translated into specific short-term targets so that short-term targets become a 'staircase' to reach long-term goals. An overall timeline is clearly articulated for both types of goals.</i></p>

Monitoring			
<p><b>3) Progress Tracking</b></p> <p>Score: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> . <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a) So thinking more about [one of the goals or objectives just mentioned]: What kinds of indicators do you use to track the city's progress in reaching this goal? What sources of information are used to perform this tracking? b) How frequently are these indicators measured? Who gets to see this performance data?</p>		
	<p><i>Score 1: There are no specific indicators or measures to track if objectives are being met; tracking is an ad-hoc process (certain processes are not tracked at all)</i></p>	<p><i>Score 3: Most performance indicators are tracked formally; tracking is overseen by only a few members of the staff rather than communicated widely</i></p>	<p><i>Score 5: Progress is continuously tracked with specific, formal indicators. This tracking is communicated widely across the city government to a variety of staff.</i></p>
<p><b>4) Progress Review</b></p> <p>Score: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> . <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a) And how often do you review whether [Name of City] is on track to meet its goals with other members of the government or with city staff, either formally or informally? b) Can you give me an example of a recent meeting where you discussed this? c) Who is usually involved in these meetings? Who gets to see the results of this review? d) What sort of follow-up plan usually results from these meetings?</p>		
	<p><i>Score 1: Performance/ progress is reviewed infrequently or in an un-meaningful way (e.g. only success or failure is noted)</i></p>	<p><i>Score 3: Performance is reviewed periodically with successes and failures identified; results are only communicated to a few staff members; no clear follow up/ action plan is adopted</i></p>	<p><i>Score 5: Progress is continually reviewed, based on specific indicators; tracking consistently results in follow-up plans to ensure continuous improvement; results are communicated widely to staff members</i></p>

People Management				
<p><b>5) Building a High-Performance Culture through Incentives and Appraisals</b></p> <p>Score: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ .□</p>	<p>a) Do you have an appraisal system to assess staff performance? Could you explain how it works? b) Are there any procedures in place to recognize or reward the best performers across different staff groups, either formally or informally? c) What types of professional development opportunities are provided for top performers?</p>	<p><i>Score 1: No appraisal system, either formal or informal. No type of rewards, recognition, or professional development for top-performers</i></p>	<p><i>Score 3: There is an evaluation system which allows employees to get feedback and rewards or recognizes good performance, but the system is informal and not applied systematically</i></p>	<p><i>Score 5: There is a formal evaluation system that monitors staff performance and allows staff members to receive feedback. Rewards or recognition are given for top performers, formally or informally</i></p>
	<p><b>6) Removing Poor Performers</b></p> <p>Score: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ .□</p>	<p>a) If you had a staff member who was struggling or who could not do his/ her job, what would you do? Can you give me a recent example?</p>	<p><i>Score 1: Poor performance is not addressed or addressed very inconsistently; poor performers are rarely removed from their position</i></p>	<p><i>Score 3: Poor performance is addressed, but not always consistently, and usually through a limited range of methods (e.g. "encouraging the person to do better")</i></p>
Operations				
<p><b>7) Efficiency of Procurement</b></p> <p>Score: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ .□</p>	<p>a) Could you talk me through the usual process of writing either a procurement bid or RFP in your city? [RFP = Request For Proposal] b) Thinking about a typical [RFP or bid], how far ahead of time do you usually issue the announcement relative to when the service is needed? c) How standardized is this procedure across different city departments?</p>	<p><i>Score 1: Mayor does not know about / there is no standardized process to issuing RFPs; RFPs are not anticipated ahead of time and are issued as needs arise.</i></p>	<p><i>Score 3: Mayor states there are common guidelines across staff groups on how to issue RFPs; RFPs are not anticipated far ahead of time and are issued as needs arise</i></p>	<p><i>Score 5: There are common official guidelines across staff groups; RFPs are anticipated in a timely manner.</i></p>

Other measures of Leader Quality	
<b>Perry Public Service Motivation Index</b>	
I will now read another series of statements. Please tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement, using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "disagree strongly" and 5 is "agree strongly".	
a) Politics is a dirty word ____ b) The give and take of public policy-making does not appeal to me ____ c) I don't care much for politicians ____ d) I unselfishly contribute to my community ____ e) Meaningful public service is very important to me ____ f) I would prefer seeing public officials do what is best for the whole community even if it harmed my interests ____ g) I consider public service my civic duty ____ h) It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress ____ i) I am often reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on one another ____ l) I have little compassion for people in need who are unwilling to take the first step to help themselves ____	
<b>Education</b>	
What category best describes your level of education?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Eight grade or less <input type="checkbox"/> Some High School <input type="checkbox"/> High School degree / GED <input type="checkbox"/> Some College <input type="checkbox"/> 2-yr College Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-yr College Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Degree (JD/MD/MBA)
<b>Previous Occupation</b>	
<b>19)</b> What job did you have either before or during your time as mayor/city manager of [city name]? _____	

**Scoring Interviews** The main goal of the survey is to obtain an outcome-agnostic measure of the managerial competence of respondents (mayors or city managers). This is achieved by posing questions that do not focus on the “output” of the leaders but rather deal with the practices involved in producing said output. Managerial effectiveness is evaluated along the four dimensions (*target setting, performance monitoring, incentives, operations*), with a total of seven questions. The full survey questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

The target setting section of the survey deals with the goals that the mayor/manager has set for her time in office. Respondents are evaluated not on the content of their goals (whether that be increasing tourism, a redevelopment project, etc.) but rather on the clarity of those objectives. For example, are the goals clearly stated with associated practical targets? Do the leaders identify a mix of short and long-term goals with appropriate time horizons?

Are these goals communicated to other members of the city staff, with specific subtasks delegated when appropriate? The monitoring section deals with tracking the performance of the government in attaining its goals. In particular it asks whether the progress tracking is informed by data, how often this monitoring takes place, and how the monitoring practice involves different levels or people within the city government.

The operations section investigates the respondent's knowledge and oversight over the procurement procedures of her city (one of the most important and time consuming operations for municipal governments) and the efficiency in their implementation. Finally, the incentives section deals with assessing how well the mayor/city manager incentivizes the municipal bureaucracy, specifically by rewarding top performers and addressing or rectifying poor performance among the staff.

Each answer is evaluated in real time by the interviewer who assigns a score for each question ranging from one to five. The interviewer assigns the score based on a rubric containing the criteria that the respondent's answer has to satisfy in order to obtain each score. The unweighted average across all individual scores assigned to each leader will be used as the measure of the mayor or city manager's overall managerial effectiveness.

All respondents are also evaluated in terms of their oversight of anti-corruption measures in their city and are asked the standard questions associated with the Perry public sector motivation index. Interviewers also collect data on the respondents' age, birthplace, educational attainment, previous occupation, years of experience as mayor/city manager, and ideological leaning. The survey for mayors contains an additional question on the mayor's political aspirations, as well as three questions on city characteristics, measuring if the city holds partisan elections, if the city has a full-time administrator on the staff, and the extent of mayoral powers (to differentiate between strong and weak mayor-council cities). These characteristics are collected at the end of the survey in order to minimize both attrition and interviewer's bias, as described in the next section.



**Collecting Unbiased Responses** The managerial competence score described above is potentially subject to both interviewee and interviewer induced bias. The interviewee could answer untruthfully, systematically gearing her responses toward what she believes is the best answer. The interviewer might also systematically under or over score responses based on interviewees’ characteristics and preconceptions he might have about the competence of the interviewee or about the local government in question. The use of a double-blind survey technique based on [Bloom and Van Reenen \(2007\)](#) minimizes these two biases.

Interviewee bias, or bias from self-reporting, is minimized in two ways: respondents are unaware that they are being scored,<sup>6</sup> and the questions they are posed are open-ended (i.e. “What types of professional development opportunities are provided for top performers?”) rather than being closed (i.e. “Do you provide professional development opportunities for top performers[yes/no]?”) so as not to clearly indicate a “best” or a “worst” answer.

Interviewer bias is limited by the fact that interviews are conducted by phone, and that the interviewer has no information on the performance of the city. Finally, all interviewers go through a training workshop stressing the importance of scoring each answer separately, based on the scoring rubric, rather than on the overall impression of the interviewee. Each interview is recorded (conditional on the respondent’s permission to record), and we validate the reliability of the procedure by having a second interviewer score the same interview based on the recording. Moreover, each interviewer will conduct a minimum of 40 interviews, allowing us to account for interviewer fixed effects in the analysis. This controls for an interviewer’s general tendency to over- or under-score responses irrespective of the interviewees’ characteristics.

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<sup>6</sup>Respondents are de-briefed on this and all aspects of the interview via email after the interview as per the IRB protocol.

## B Appendix B

### B.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table A1: Summary statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
<i>Panel A: Respondent Characteristics</i>					
Managerial Score	3.688	0.724	1.75	5	283
Managerial Score ICW	-0.014	1.005	-2.773	1.831	283
Public Sector Motivation	4.195	0.36	3.1	5	281
Public Sector Motivation ICW	0.000	1	-2.963	2.117	270
Education (years)	18.403	2.444	13	23	283
Occupational Prestige Score	57.544	10.318	22.9	72.2	275
Mincer Residual	0	50.365	-142.063	275.216	251
Salary (thousands of \$)	134.327	90.930	4	528.442	251
Female	0.141	0.349	0	1	283
Age	50.212	9.439	25	74	283
Years in Local Government	11.73	7.931	1	40	283
Manager	0.58	0.495	0	1	283
Ideology - Left	0.33	0.471	0	1	267
Ideology - Center	0.3	0.459	0	1	267
Ideology - Right	0.371	0.484	0	1	267
<i>Panel B: City Characteristics</i>					
% White	0.78	0.174	0.212	0.994	283
% College Degree	0.306	0.163	0.036	0.791	283
% Poverty	0.129	0.075	0.014	0.385	283
% Unemployed	0.084	0.034	0.019	0.21	283
% Contributors to Reps	0.423	0.234	0.016	1	283
Median Income (log)	10.861	0.396	9.822	12.303	283
Median Home Value (log)	12.264	0.676	11.123	13.816	283
Population (log)	10.012	1.076	7.397	13.58	283
<i>Panel C: Goals</i>					
Financial Management	0.332	0.604	0	3	223
Economic Development	0.293	0.471	0	2	223
Education	0.035	0.203	0	2	223
Governance	0.375	0.608	0	3	223
Socioeconomic Issues	0.184	0.423	0	2	223
Infrastructure	0.272	0.491	0	2	223
Quality of Life	0.442	0.652	0	3	223
Relationships	0.074	0.323	0	3	223
Number of Goals Mentioned	2.547	1.254	1	6	223

Table A2: Interviewed vs. Non-Interviewed Cities - Balance

	Accepted Interview	Declined Interview	All Other Cities in State	$\Delta$ Accepted vs. Decline	$\Delta$ Accepted vs. All Other
Population	10.1	9.9	9.6	0.13 (1.71)	0.46 (6.14)
Median Income	10.94	10.86	10.86	0.08 (2.66)	0.08 (3.15)
Median House Value	12.3	12.2	12.0	0.12 (2.58)	0.26 (7.16)
Poverty	10.7	12.1	12.0	-1.43 (-2.69)	-1.37 (-2.75)
Pct. Unemployed	4.5	4.7	4.6	-0.24 (-1.67)	-0.088 (-0.59)
Pct. Bachelors Degree	32.0	28.0	28.6	4.0 (3.23)	3.4 (3.23)
Observations	283	607	4,591		

*Notes:* Shows averages of cities that appear in our sample compared to cities that declined and all other cities in the state. All values are measured in 2017. T statistics in parenthesis.

## B.2 Validity of Measures of Quality

Recall that the overall management score is the average of the scores that the local leaders receive across four different areas: target setting, performance monitoring, operations, and incentives. Table A3 shows the pairwise correlations across these components of the overall score. While the correlations are all positive, indicating that mayors scoring highly on one dimension are also likely to score highly on other dimensions, the fact that the correlations generally do not exceed 0.5 suggest that each component captures something distinct in terms of overall management capability. The overall management score also has a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.745.

Table A3: Reliability of Management Score: Pairwise Correlations of Components

	Target Setting	Operations	Performance Monitoring
Operations	.288*		
Performance Monitoring	.489*	.483*	
Incentives	.450*	.775*	.484*

*Notes:* Each coefficient reported in the table is from a regression of the variable reported in the column on the variable reported in the row and a constant term using the 237 observations in the cross-sectional dataset. \* is significant at the 5 percent level.

## B.3 Classifying Policy Goals

The following quotes illustrate some of the different policy goals that were discussed by the leaders in our sample, as well as their associated classifications according to the Menino Survey categories.

“The biggest issue were facing is a budget shortfall largely fueled by the pension situation here in California. We have a sales tax measure that’s going to raise the sale tax 3/4 of a

cent in June, so, right now, that's kind of what we were completely focused on. If we don't get that, we'll end up with about a 13% cut in our budget for the next generation."

Policy Areas: Financial Management

"We have aging infrastructure in our community...water mains, sewer mains, roadways. That's a big thing for us. And also dealing with that while we are growing as a community and trying to enhance water treatment and wastewater treatment capacity. So we're kind of playing catch up but also trying to plan for the future, and costs are expensive."

Policy Areas: Infrastructure

"Some of the main issues currently are residential, transitional homes and housing. We have a lot of need and don't have a lot of places for people. We have three [projects] that are going forward, presently, one with complete transitional housing - an apartment complex that will have affordable housing, and we have assisted living going in in our downtown."

Policy Areas: Socioeconomic

"Higher education. We have satellite situations, but we'd love our community to actually be home to a higher education institution."

Policy Areas: Education

"Just trying to increase quality of life so everyone wants to be here while maintaining the small town character."

Policy Areas: Quality of Life

"The goal for the community was to eliminate some of the blight that had overtaken our downtown area and replace that with new businesses, new housing. And there was also one very large manufacturing company that had a 54-acre site in the center of the downtown area. We pulled our team together to look at our finances - we set ourselves out to try to figure out how we can repurpose this 54 acres and then take that model to form a plan to redevelop the downtown area. What we found was that we were challenged financially with

the money that was coming in from different taxations, different levies...it just really wasn't balanced very well. I found that the plan for community investment by the city really didn't have a targeted goals so we went through the recession and that was a perfect opportunity to restructure our taxation and restructure our finances. And from there we were then able to take the extra money that we were starting to receive from the growth of the economy into some of those economic development plans that we had set up."

Policy Areas: Financial Management, Economic Development, Governance

"Economic development is probably an issue that affects every city in the country. And that is dealing with the continuing change in the face of retail and the fact that the amount of sale on the internet through Amazon and others is continuing to put brick and mortar folks out of business."

Policy Areas: Economic Development

"When I came on, I started delegating powers and so forth to different council members to oversee the police department, to oversee the street department, to oversee the fire department so right now I have council members that are looking forward to working closely with those heads of those departments. All departments have to work together, so they can't stand along and operate independently. It has to be a partnership."

Policy Areas: Governance

"The predominant goal at this point has been capital projects, namely quality of life related to parks and recreation. In the past, we haven't had the growth or the revenue in order to accomplish those things. As we've experienced that growth, a lot of the time and energy and attention and additional resources have been flowing into that we recently did a parks and recreation master plan, and we've identified over 20 million in projects that we would want to see accomplished in the next 10 to 20 years."

Policy Areas: Economic Development, Quality of Life

Table A4: Robustness to Inverse-Covariance Weighted Indices

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Financial Management	Economic Development	Governance	Socio- economic	Infrastructure	Quality of Life	Intergov Relationships
<i>Panel A: no city controls</i>							
Public Sector Motivation ICW	-0.001 (0.043)	-0.003 (0.037)	-0.011 (0.043)	0.066* (0.033)	-0.080* (0.037)	0.049 (0.043)	-0.004 (0.026)
Managerial Score ICW	-0.048 (0.045)	-0.024 (0.039)	0.049 (0.046)	0.110* (0.035)	0.028 (0.040)	-0.072 (0.046)	-0.040 (0.028)
Education	0.010 (0.018)	-0.014 (0.015)	0.007 (0.018)	0.013 (0.013)	-0.019 (0.015)	0.004 (0.018)	-0.000 (0.011)
Occupational Prestige	0.002 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.003)	0.001 (0.004)	0.004 (0.004)	-0.006* (0.003)
<i>Panel B: with city controls</i>							
Public Sector Motivation ICW	-0.005 (0.043)	0.004 (0.037)	-0.011 (0.043)	0.061† (0.033)	-0.076* (0.038)	0.051 (0.043)	-0.007 (0.027)
Managerial Score ICW	-0.079† (0.048)	-0.010 (0.041)	0.064 (0.048)	0.090* (0.036)	0.025 (0.042)	-0.072 (0.048)	-0.024 (0.029)
Education	0.004 (0.018)	-0.013 (0.015)	0.008 (0.018)	0.009 (0.014)	-0.018 (0.016)	0.005 (0.018)	0.003 (0.011)
Occupational Prestige	0.002 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)	-0.006* (0.003)	-0.000 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)	-0.005† (0.003)
Observations	207	207	207	207	207	207	207
R-squared	0.210	0.073	0.216	0.140	0.114	0.299	0.119
Mean DV	0.411	0.386	0.469	0.232	0.343	0.551	0.101

*Notes:* ICW indicates the variable is an inverse-covariance weighted index. All specifications include a control for the number of goals mentioned by each leader. City controls in *Panel B* include median income, % white, % in poverty, % unemployed, % college educated and fixed effects for population quintiles in the period before the leader took office. The mean of the dependent variables are reported at the bottom of the table. † is significant at the 10 percent level; \* is significant at the 5 percent level.